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LANDSCAPE AND FIGURE COMPOSITION

LANDSCAPE AND FIGURE COMPOSITION

BY
SADAKICHI HARTMANN
(Sidney Allan)

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PREFACE.

THE following chapters on Landscape and Figure Composition, by Sadakichi Hartmann, were originally written for the pages of *The Photographic Times,* wherein they first appeared. The practical value of the text, profusely illustrated as it was by photo-engravings from celebrated paintings as well from original photographs, proved so great to the readers of that magazine, as the chapters appeared from month to month, and were found to be so instructive to art students in general, that their author was induced to collect them, with all of the original illustrations, for re-publication in book form.

Mr. Hartmann is a well-known art writer and critic. He is an expert with the camera, as well as with the pencil and brush; and his instructions may, therefore, be depended upon as thoroughly reliable and helpful, not only by students of photography, but also by students of the fine arts as well.

The chapters have been carefully revised and considerably enlarged for publication in book form.

CHAPTER I.

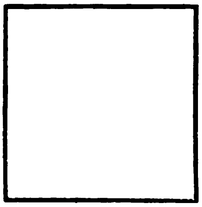
Introduction.—On the Shape and Size of Pictures.—The Sky and Horizon Line.—With Illustrations.

THE art of landscape painting was unknown to the ancient world. People lived largely an outdoor life in those days and did not seem to be interested in the depiction of their daily surroundings.

Only slowly with the growth of larger towns and cities awoke an interest in landscape delineation. Previous to the middle of the fifteenth century it was rarely introduced. Even Giotto painted naught but some stereotype park or garden scenery. Shortly after it began to be utilized as backgrounds, but it was treated by the Old Masters, with the exception of Titian, merely as an accessory. We catch a glimpse of Italian scenery through the windows of their interiors and distant panoramic views in the backgrounds of their figure compositions. They were perfect masters of perspective, were capable of rendering atmosphere and knew the value of expressing a certain mood or sentiment in harmony with the rest of the picture, but they did not realize the independent pictorial possibilities of landscapes.

In the same year of 1600 two men were born, one in France and the other in Holland, who were destined to become the two greatest landscape painters of the seventeenth century. Their names are known to everybody interested in art: Claude Lorraine and Ruysdael. They were the first to make a specialty of it, giving due attention to details. Lorraine was fond of showing miles and miles of country in beautiful light effects, vast panoramic views of historical or classical interest. Ruysdael was the first realist. His subjects were exceedingly simple for his time, he was satisfied with farm houses, windmills, meadows, woodland, windblown trees and quiet woodland pools, but they look overcrowded to us. We prefer mere fragments of nature, such as the Barbizon artists have painted.

This striving for simplicity started with Gainsborough and Constable. Gainsborough succeeded in simplying the themes of the Dutch painters, but



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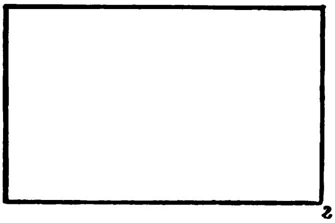

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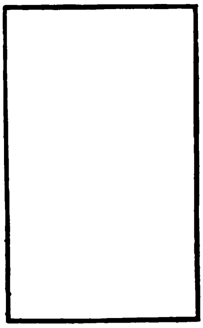

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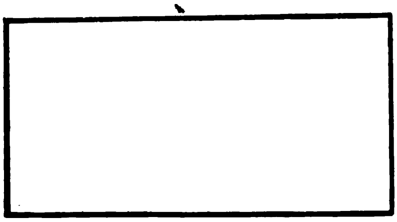

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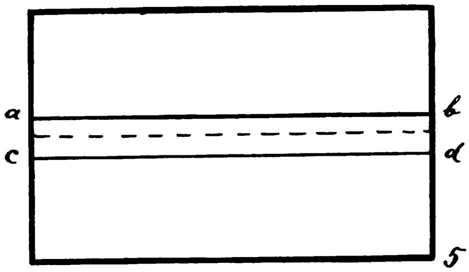
it was left to Constable to strike the first modern note. He abolished all classical traditions, he tried to paint objects as he saw them without altering them into special conventional shapes that had been invented by the Old Masters.

Landscape painting is of practical educational value to photographers only since Constable's time, the beginning of the last century. He was the pathfinder for the masters of Barbizon, just as Turner with his weird atmospheric experiments was the forerunner of the Impressionists.

With Corot, Rousseau and Daubigny, landscape painting, the so-called *paysage intime,* reached its prime. They mastered everything necessary for a good landscape: color, draughtsmanship, graceful composition, poetical sentiment, and truth to nature. The Impressionists only added a lighter tonality, they handle their subjects differently and frequently most interestingly but they do not possess a more perfect mastery of the essentials of landscape art as is often claimed for them, than their predecessors.

All I have to discuss in this book is composition. My endeavor will be to analyze and to make as clear as possible the fundamental principles that underly the construction of landscape pictures. They are like art itself, of a decidedly eclectic nature. There are the viewpoints and rules of the Old Masters, of the Dutch painters, of all the various schools up to our own American landscape painters, Inness, Wyant, Homer Martin, and Tryon that rank second only to those of France, and last and by no means least of the Japanese artists with their unsymmetrical space division and quaint suggestiveness. All these possess attractions and influence the modern picture-maker. It is impossible to comprehend and utilize all their peculiarities without long and serious study. I hope to be able—although I am obliged to condense a vast amount of information into a comparatively small compass—to convey by simple straightforward language and well chosen examples those phases, forms and principles of pictorial composition that every landscape photographer should be familiar with. My intention is to devote six chapters to landscape composition, one chapter on the placing of figures in landscape and then to branch off into figure composition.



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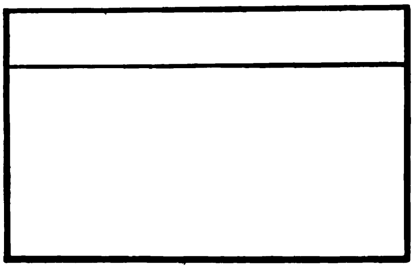
The first thing to be considered is the shape and size of the picture. For landscape the oblong shape is the preferable one. The ordinary landscape, as we look at it, represents a wide extent of space. Out of this expanse we select a fragment for pictorial purposes and as the horizontal lines and planes are generally more predominant and longer than the vertical, the oblong shape proves the best to arrange them. The canons of Colorado or a wood interior of California pines would look well in an upright, but flat country or the sea, or any expanse of country with a strong, foreground and varied middle distance will in most cases fare better in the oblong.



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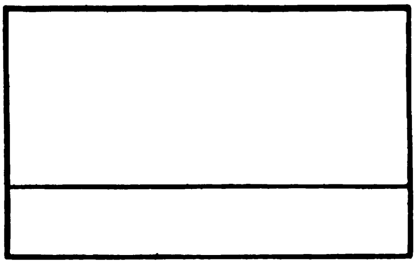

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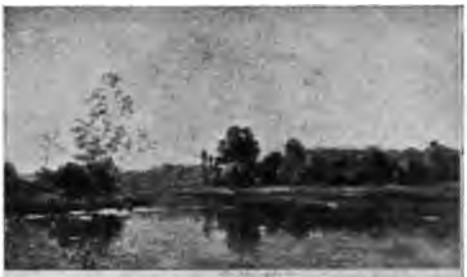
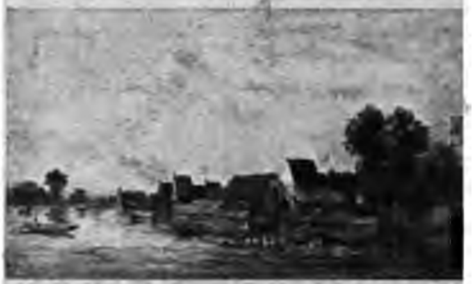
The perfect square shape (Diag. 1) is difficult to handle. Somehow most schemes of composition do not fit into it. They always look a trifle forced, awkward or clumsy. It is most advisable to avoid that shape entirely.

The most preferable size of the oblong shape (Diag. 2 is about 4 x 6 or 4 x 7. The exact size is largely a matter of taste and convenience. When we go to a stationer to order our visiting cards, we approve of certain sizes and dislike others and finally select the one we like best. Very few people select odd sizes. This feeling for proper form relations is to a certain extent inborn with us, but when we get to making pictures we are apt to overlook it. We should carefully weigh the opportunities which each shape affords before we make the start, and not simply do it because the entire subject we happen to be interested in does not cover the plate.

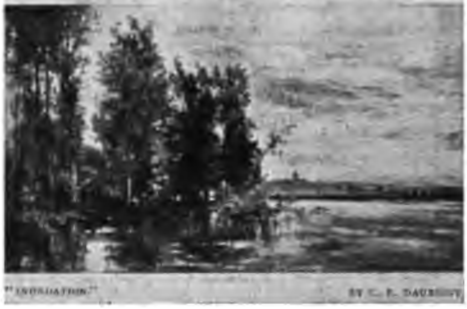
The size of diagram 4 which is 4 x 8 is entirely too wide, and yet pictures of this class enjoyed public favor. Daubigny (Fig. 9) painted most of his pictures in exaggerated oblong, and we all remember the cheap etchings that were once so popular. As you will notice Daubigny was fond of depicting long stretches of sea and soil and long narrow strips of wood and meadowland. The choice of subjects explains his preference.



"A MISTY LANDSCAPE" BY C. F. DAUBIGNY



"SUNSET" BY C. F. DAUBIGNY



"INUNDATION" BY C. F. DAUBIGNY

(Figures 7, 8 and 9.)

The choice of subjects will also decide when shape three is preferable to shape four. We will return to this subject in future discussions. The exaggerated oblong as an upright is the most unwieldy of all. It generally proves to be a waste of space. The oval and other forms like the half circle (for fans) are hardly ever used, and if used, depend more on trimming than anything else. A weak foreground in the middle and a poor sky make an excellent fan composition.

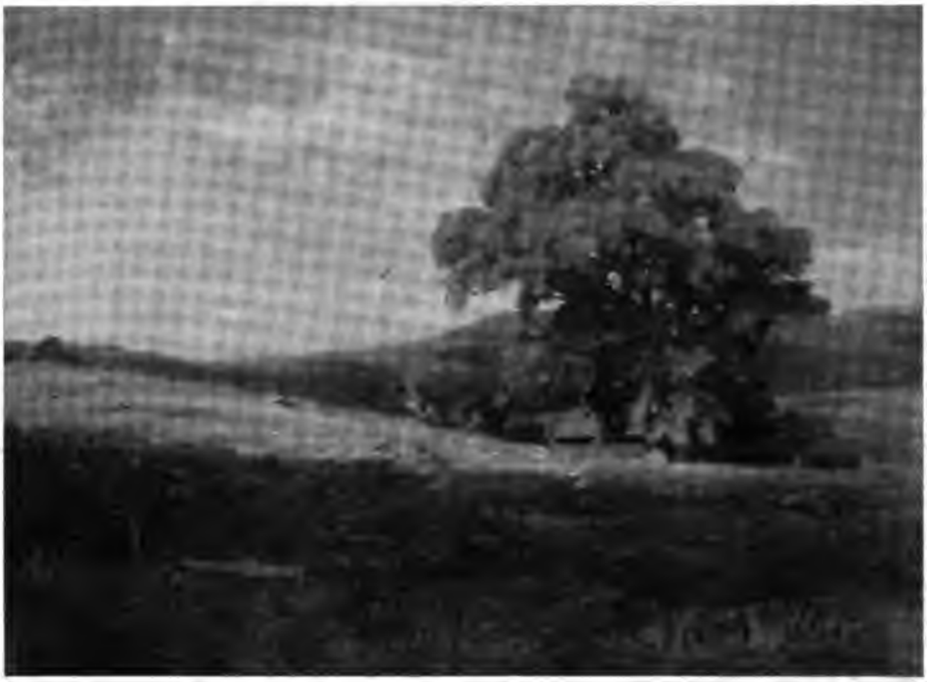
The most important line is the sky and horizon line which separates the air from earth and water, the sky from the sail and sea.

All other lines, however conspicuous they may be and important to the making of the picture, as the shore line in a seascape, the bank of a river (Fig. 3) or distinct lines in the foreground (Figs. 1 and 5), they are invariably subordinated to this line.

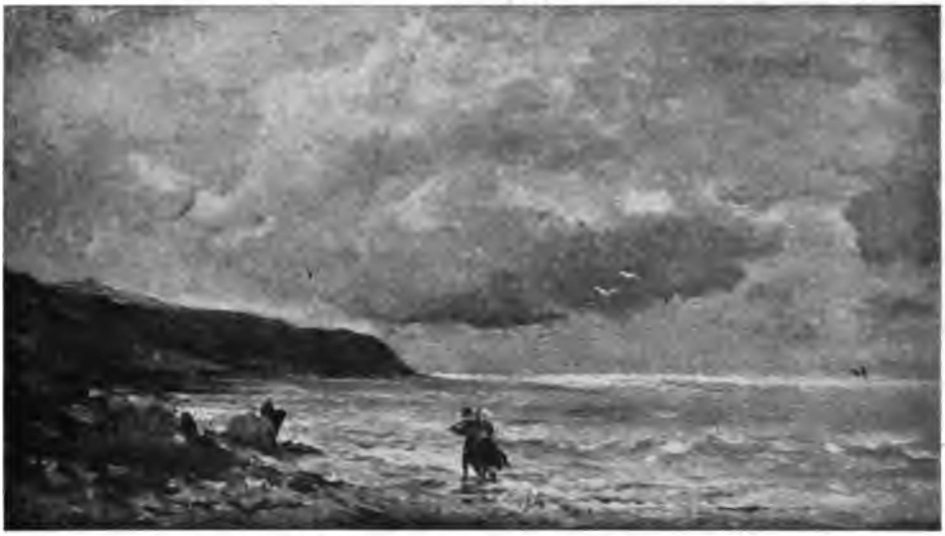
Its direction and character is of course endless in its variety. It is seldom perfectly straight and horizontal as in Fig. 5. In most cases it would be too bold. It needs some break as the dark headland in Fig. 4. Nor should it be a monotonous, zigzag repetition as in Fig. 2. It should undulate freely and with the help of trees, buildings, rocks, etc., furnish a pleasing rhythmic line of division between lighter and dark masses. The reader by this time probably understands what I mean to convey by the term sky and horizon lines. They are mostly mixed up, a part of each. Figs. 2, 3, and 6 show pure sky lines. Fig. 5 is the only one which presents a pure horizon line. Fig. 1, 4, and the three Daubigny's are mixtures. This line is nearly always the most important feature of a picture. The success of some pictures is made by it, as for instance Fig. 6. Daubigny, strange to say, did not seem to lay special stress on the beauty of his sky lines. I fear they were a trifle too long to flow with ease across the picture.

Of course there are landscapes, for instance wood interiors, where this line is absent. But there will always be some other line that will take its part.

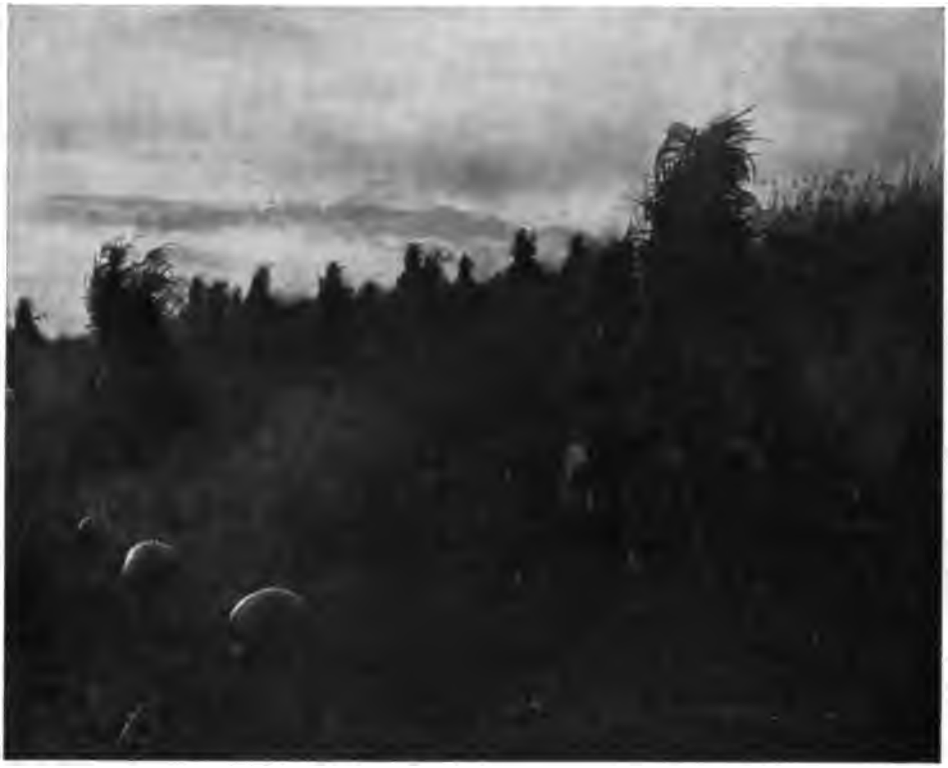
The main part of this line is generally situated in the region A B or C D of



SUMMER MORNING. [Fig. 1.] *Paul Dougherty.*

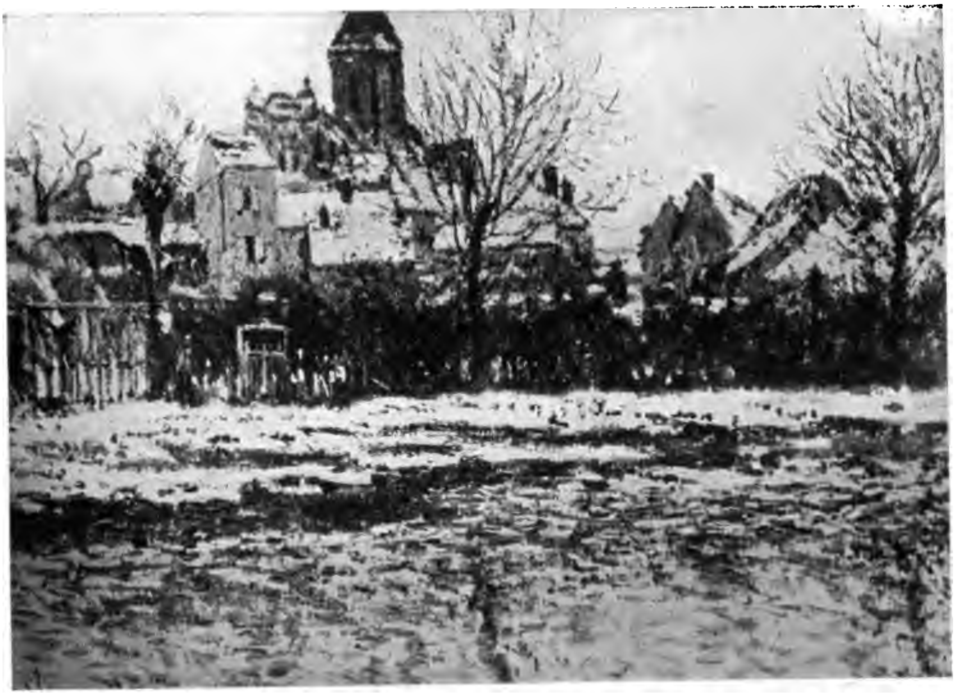


THE APPROACHING STORM. [Fig. 4.] *C. F. Daubigny.*

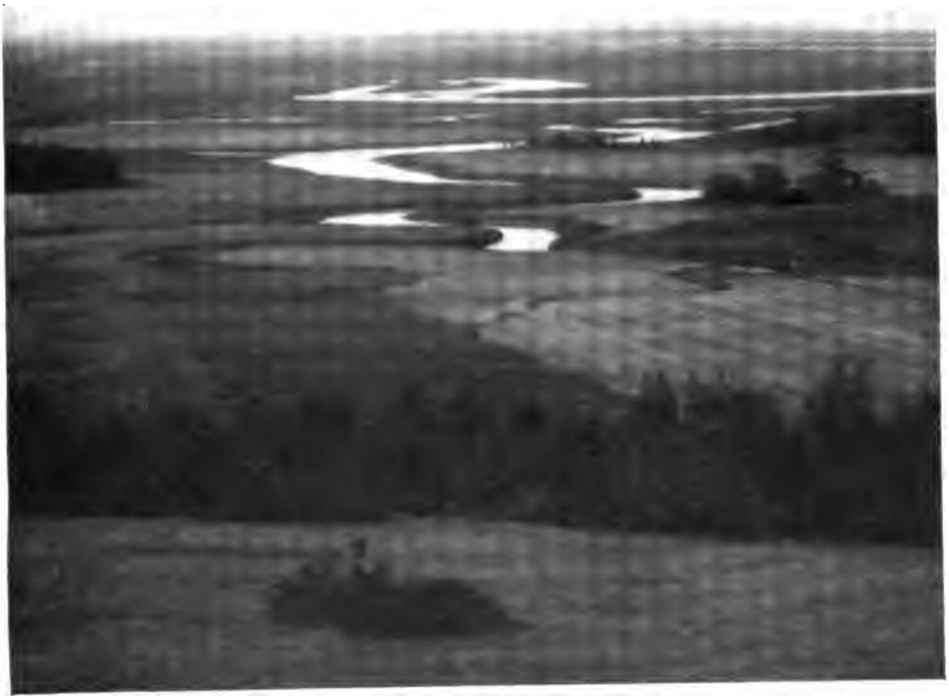


BLEAK NOVEMBER. [Fig. 2.] *Louis Fleckenstein.*

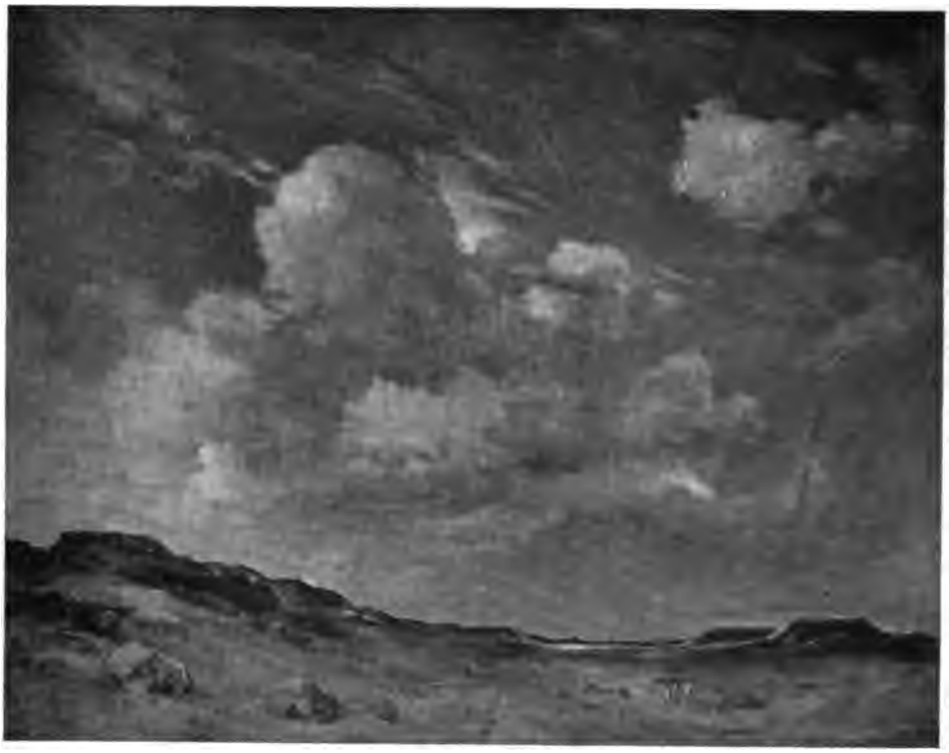
diagram 5, a trifle above or beneath the middle. It should never be exactly in the middle as indicated by the dotted line. In recent art we often see the sky line very high as in diagram 6 or very low as in diagram 7. It is suitable for novel effects but not to be recommended unless the whole composition is specially arranged for it. In Coburn's "The Dragon, Ipswich," (Fig. 5) we have the high sky line, which helps to express the vastness of the territory depicted. In "Arizona Clouds," by A. L. Groll, Fig. 6, we have the low sky line which by giving an undue share of prominence of sky and rolling clouds, tried to express very much the same thing, the immensity of a desolate tract of country. Both look affected, not quite natural. It is by far safer to adopt the rule that the sky should never be nearer to the top and bottom than one-quarter of the height of the picture. In Fig. 4 it is about as low as it ordinarily can be and yet it is more than one-quarter. If you follow this rule you will get a more normal picture, which after all is more desirable than any highstrung effect, particularly so if it is merely an imitation and not evolved from an original inspiration.



CHURCH AT VETHEUIL. [Fig. 3.] *By Claude Monet.*



THE DRAGON, IPSWICH. [Fig. 5.] *By A. L. Coburn.*



ARIZONA CLOUDS. [Fig. 6.] *A. L. Groll.*

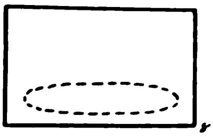
CHAPTER II.

Geometrical Forms of Composition.—The Ellipse.—Horizontal and Diagonal Arrangements.—The Triangular Cut.—Rectangular Construction.—With Seven Illustrations and Five Diagrams.

GEOMETRICAL forms as the underlying principles of picture construction are scarcer in landscape than in figure composition. The circle, the oval, the equilateral triangle, the quadrilateral shapes, etc., which play such an important part in figure composition are unavailable in landscape composition.

The basis to work upon is a much simpler one. The most popular form is the elongated ellipse (Diag. 8). Corot, the greatest master and innovator of landscape composition, was particularly fond of it. He invented a typical arrangement for all lake and woodland pool painters that followed him. Figures 12 and 13 are two fair examples of it. In Ranger's painting we have a clear ellipse. It dominates the whole picture, and would do so in a still more pronounced degree if the horizon line were higher. The eye involuntarily glides around the elongated shape and if all objects in its vicinity are arranged in such a way that they form mere accents to the leading line, the composition will be pleasing to the eye. Notice the boat in this picture, the dark spots in the foreground, and the shrubbery to the left which meets one end of the ellipse. They all help to make the picture more charming. Larger objects can be handled in the same way; they may even interrupt the continuity of the line, as the sheep in Dessar's picture, without destroying the harmony. It is impossible to tell what forms would be most advantageous or what lines should be avoided. This is entirely a matter of feeling and good taste, and can only be realized by numerous experiments.

Fig. 13 is a more rugged composition than Fig. 12 and merely a modification of the regular ellipse arrangement. But even here it tells its story. Without the pool the picture would lack interest. The white surface of the pool is balanced by the dark foliage, and yet you may take away the tree and still preserve a charming picture, provided the horizon line would follow the un-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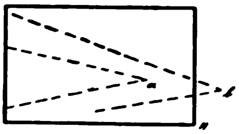
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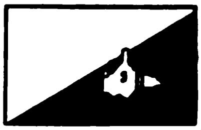
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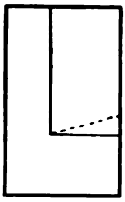
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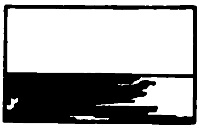
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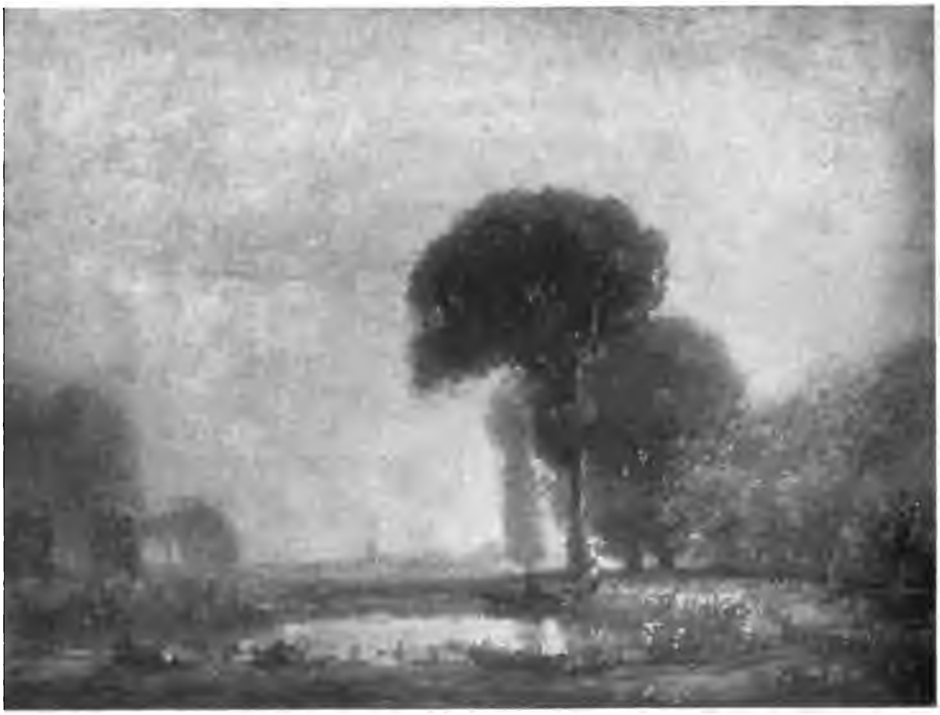
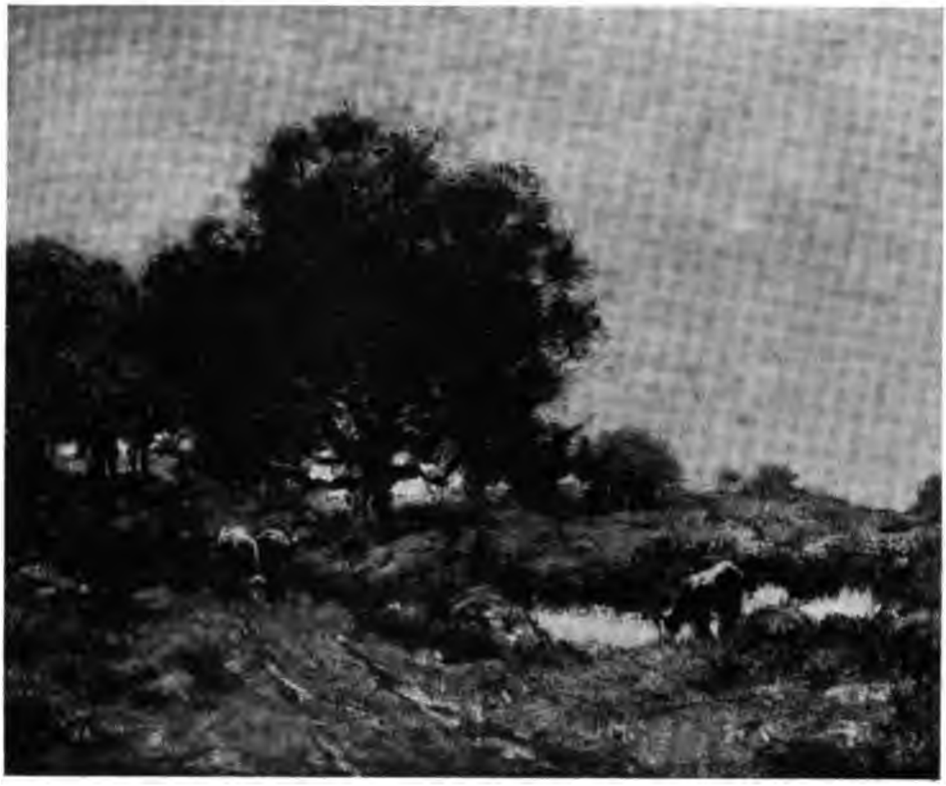
dulating line of the pool on the right side as well as on the left. The rocks and sheep at the left end of the ellipse melt into the ellipse and the ruts of the road run parallel with a part of it. The small cluster of trees in the distance repeats the dark spot of the shore line above the head of the sheep. All these details join to make this picture a good composition, but they are all dependent on the dominating form of the ellipse. For these various reasons the introduction of an ellipse is always safe, and frequently successful if sufficient pains are taken.

Another much favored form is the diagonal composition (Diag. 9). It is rarely used exactly the way as I have indicated it. It merely represents an extreme possibility, dividing the picture into a light and dark triangle. It is the broadest effect possible. Fig. 14 and 15, and Fig. 2 (I will sometimes be obliged to refer to the illustrations of previous articles) carry out modifications of this scheme. The line does not exactly start in the corners but lower down or higher up, but as long as it runs diagonally across the picture and produces a triangular shape at the bottom, the arrangement is to be



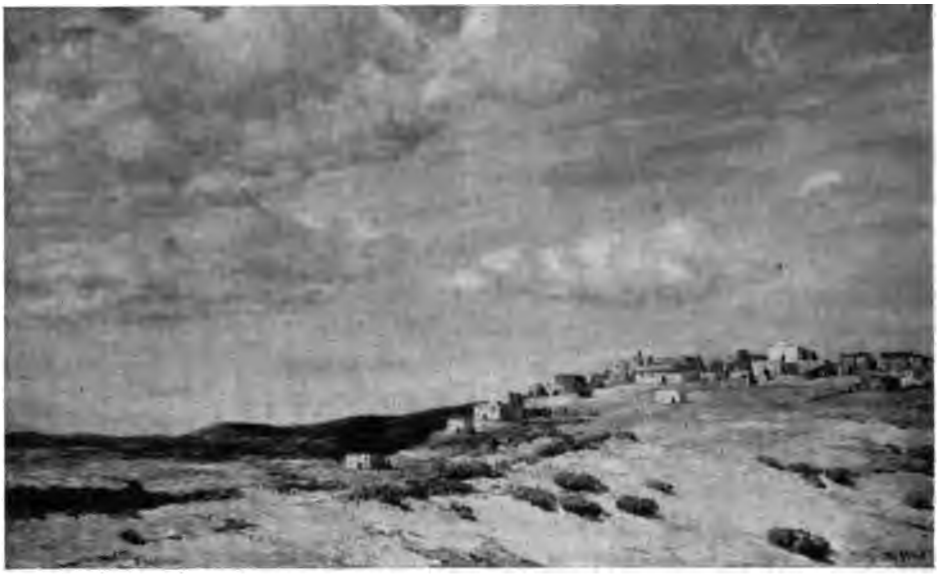
THE POOL. (Fig. 12.) *H. W. Ranger.*



SHEEP PASTURE. (Fig. 13.) *L. Dessar.*

classed among the diagonal compositions. Fig. 14 would surely look better if the city were raised a trifle higher and offered a more diagonal slant with the adjoining foothills. Fig. 15 is constructed on that principle—the dark rocks against the lighter sea. Fig. 2, in a way, was the best example for conveying the principle of this style of composition. But the dark mass with its monotony of cornstacks lacked interest. There was nothing to lend it animation. Some lighter object or a lighter effect on the cornstalks should have been introduced. This idea I wished to convey by drawing the little building into the dark triangle of Fig. 9. There must be something to give life to the dark planes. Also Fig. 15 seems rather deficient in this respect, but it may be in the color which is lost in the reproduction. One should always be very careful in judging the monochrome values in reproductions of paintings.

If you should have the leisure and opportunity of studying paintings in exhibitions, or through the mediums of magazines or books you will be astonished how many pictures are built up on this principle. Always keep diagram 9 in your mind, when you attempt a picture of this kind. Get as near to it as possible. The broader the effect is without neglecting the details the better will be the composition. It is much more pliable than the ellipse com-

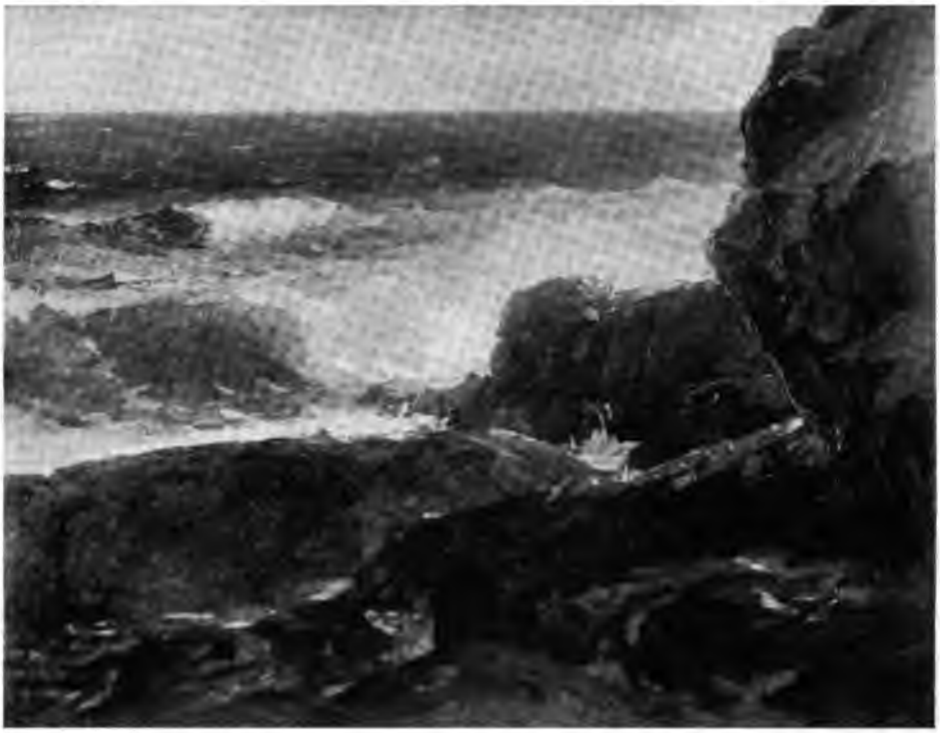


LAGUNA, NEW MEXICO. **(Fig. 14.)** *A. L. Groll.*

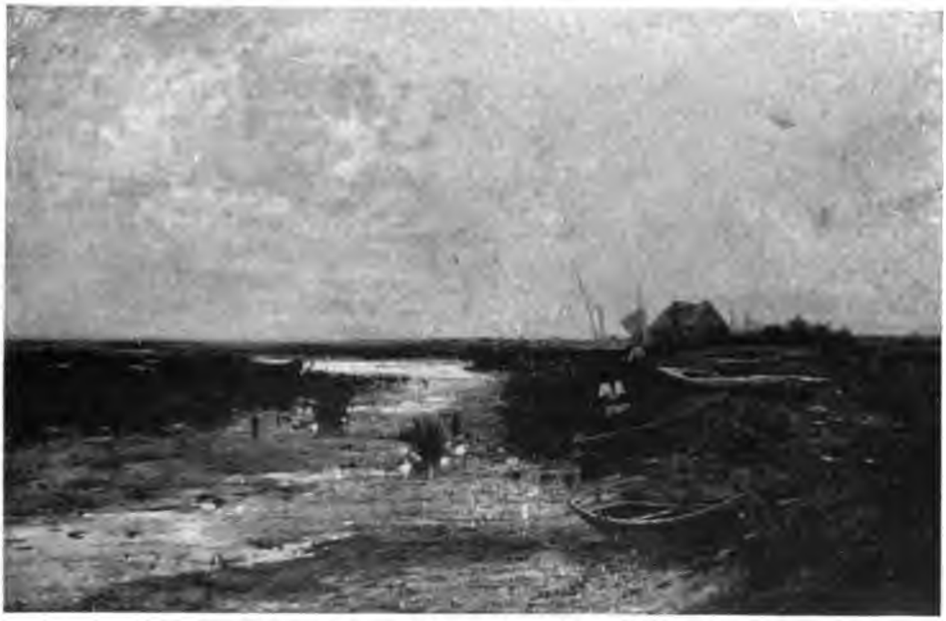
position as it offers much more variety, an infinite number of schemes, suitable almost to every subject.

The simplest form of composition is set forth in Diag. 10 and Fig. 11. It is merely the play of one dark oblong against another lighter one of almost equal size. It is, however, not as easy as it seems at the first glance. The lower darker oblong should always be the smaller one or in other words the sky line should be lower than the middle of the picture. This will bring the two masses into proper relation. The remainder depends entirely on the breaking up of the two masses. This is well done in Gay's picture. You will notice that there is a tendency for horizontal lines, and if slanting lines are introduced as in the two boats and the lines in the lower left corner that they run parallel. But this does not belong to the present chapter. We first must form a basis to work upon before we can go into details. This style of composition is best suited to midocean marines and solitary tracts of marshland. It is somewhat heavy and only adapts itself to sombre subjects.

Fig. 10, "A Symphony in Gold," by A. L. Groll (painted entirely in golds and yellows) represents what I call the triangular cut (Diag. 11). It is always effective. It does somewhat the same service as the ellipse. Only it does not pull the rest of the composition towards it which is one of the principal advantages of the ellipse. On the contrary it makes a direct cut into the picture. It has to be balanced by all other shapes in the picture. The foreground—there is entirely too much of it—was really unnecessary and the painter only saved it by repeating in it vaguely the shape of the triangular cut. In landscape the cut A (Diag. 11) occurs most frequently. Cut B is more suitable for figure work, but it also happens in landscapes. The upper



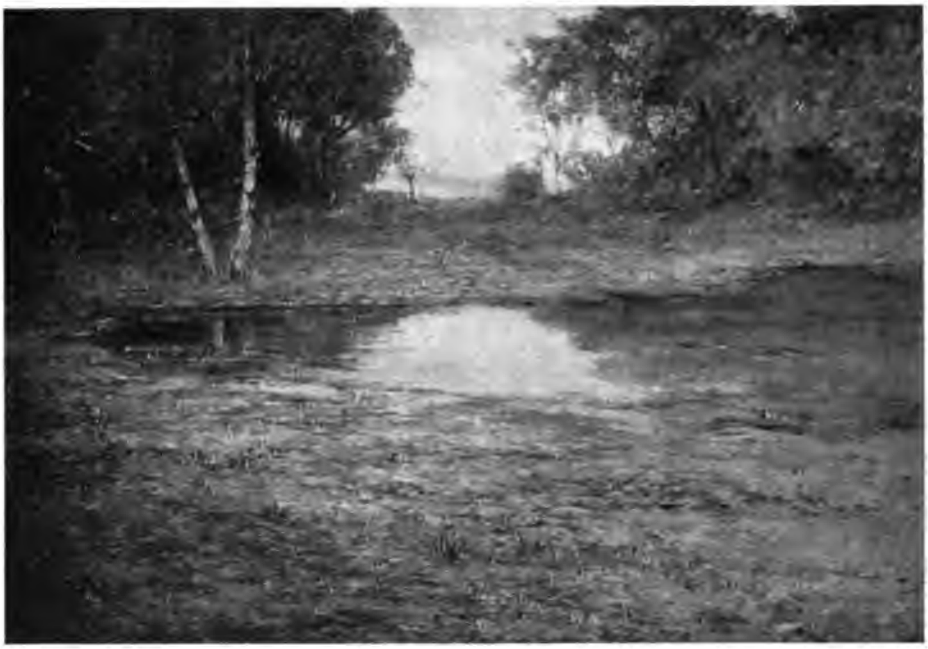
LOOKING SEAWARD. (Fig. 15.) *Paul Dougherty.*



WASHED BY THE SEA. (Fig. 11.) *Edw. Gay.*

triangular would be the sky, the cut itself might furnish the landscape, trees, a hill or a flower field, and the small triangle in the lower corner might be taken up by a strip of water or a road.

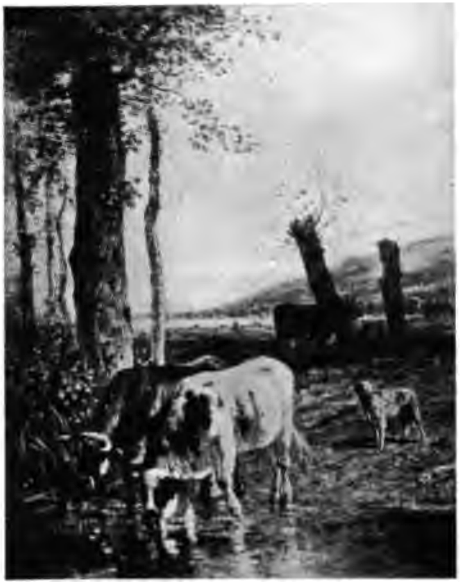
The last form of composition under consideration is the rectangular arrangement (Diag. 12). It is most suitable for the upright shape. Of course it is in landscapes hardly ever strictly rectangular but more as the dotted line indicates. In the "Drinking Cows," by Troyon we have a good specimen. Nothing simpler could be imagined. I even doubt if the cow in the background and the two willow stumps were necessary. This style lends itself particularly to the depiction of "edge of forest" scenes, to tree trunks, with a pool in the foreground. Charming pictures can be made of beeches and other trees with an interesting bark texture. Corot often used a modification of this arrangement by giving the vertical line the twist of an S shape.



A SYMPHONY IN GOLD. (Fig. 10.) *A. L. Groll.*

In the oblong landscape the rectangular composition is less effective. Turn the diagram lengthways and you will see for yourself that the shapes do not produce an agreeable impression. But it is often used as a minor incident, as for instance in Fig. 12, but even there it is nothing particularly beautiful. Its lines are too harsh. In the upright they give strength to the picture, in the oblong they generally form a disaccord.

The five geometrical forms I had occasion to exploit in this chapter and I hope sufficiently minutely and exactly to be of value, represent about all that are necessary to know. Many students of composition may differ with me on that



DRINKING COWS. (Fig. 16.) C. Troyon.

point. But it has always been my policy to eliminate whatever I deem unessential. Discussions that are too involved, too crowded with burdensome technicalities, are never read. They merely confuse. My object is first of all to gain the sympathy of my readers, so that they may follow my arguments, which they would fail to do without it. Theories are only of service if they awaken reflection, and produce practical results. And for that reason I have chosen these geometric forms which may be termed classic, which appear and reappear wherever landscapes are painted, drawn, or photographed. Each of them has its own individuality. We have learnt that.

The principal qualities of ellipse composition are grace and harmony, those of diagonal and horizontal composition strength and breadth, while the triangular cast lends variety to a picture and the rectangular composition a certain simplicity and elegance. They all possess a strange vitality and can not help conveying sufficient inspiration for new treatment and new combinations. Many more intricate methods will follow, but none of more importance than the fundamental forms. They are the starting point and form the basis for all further discussions on the silhouette, the point of interest, Parallelism, Line, Tone, and Chiaroscural Composition.

We all have seen pictures that are technically good, that are printed from an excellent negative with all details faithfully produced and conscientiously worked out, and notwithstanding may be found painfully uninteresting. Why? The advanced photographer says because the composition is uninteresting or badly constructed.

I am of the opinion that by far oftener the subject has been so uninteresting that nothing could be done with it, or what is more plausible that the photographer did not get interested in the subject sufficiently to bring his best faculties into play. A good landscape photograph must be a faithful record, and I even go farther than that by saying a good landscape photograph cannot be good without being a faithful record.

The faculty of observation I consider as important as the knowledge of composition. And that does not depend entirely on the composition. It depends on your knowledge of nature, your love for out-of-doors, and your ability to read a mood of your own temperament into a scene. Work out your own thoughts and schemes.

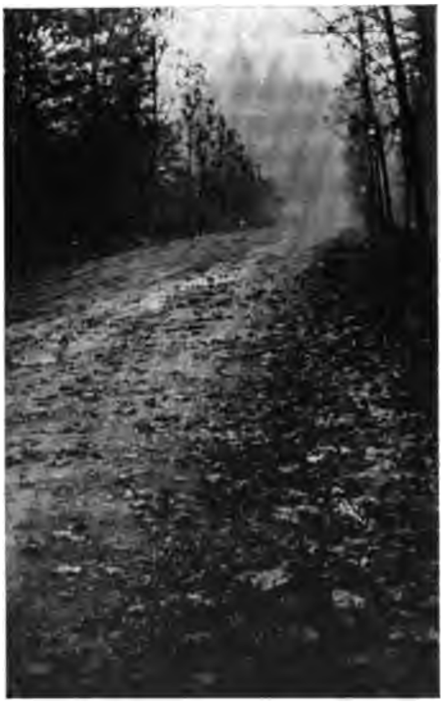
CHAPTER III.

The Point of Interest.—The Silhouette.—Symmetry.—Perspective.—Parallelism of Horizontal and Vertical Lines.—Line Compositions of Vertical Tendency.—With Eleven Illustrations and Eight Diagrams.

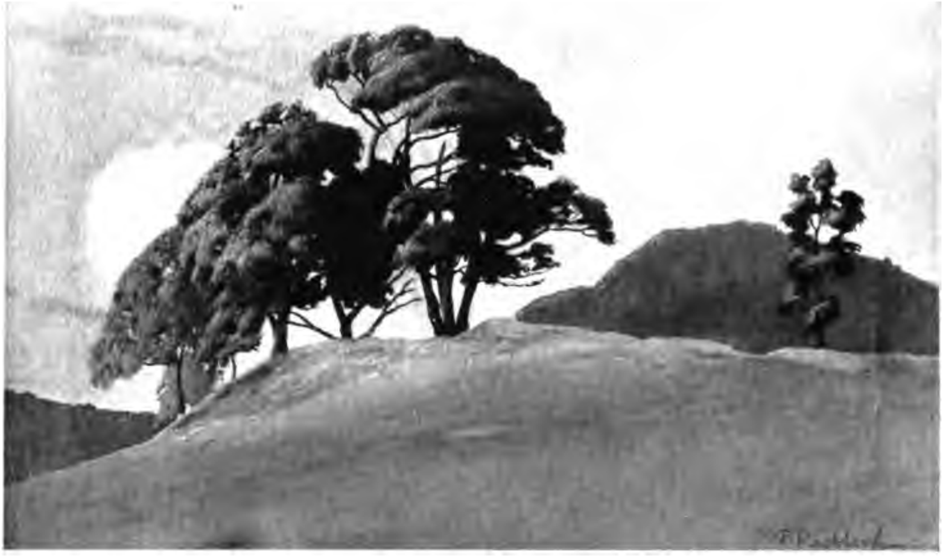
THE establishment of a "point of interest," has always been considered to be one of the most important factors in pictorial composition. The majority of carefully thought out and executed pictures, and surely all elaborate compositions, have such a main object of interest, not merely as far as the subject is concerned, but also placed in such a way that it immediately attracts our attention and asserts itself as the controlling force in the remainder of the composition. This is particularly true of figure composition. It is not quite as essential in landscape arrangement.

If we study the illustrations accompanying this chapter we will find that Figs. 23 and 25 have no point of interest, and that it would be difficult to determine where such a point is situated in Figs. 17 and 20. These pictures are merely fragments like the "Group of Birches" and the "Silhouette" or dependent on other principles of composition, which I shall discuss later on.

In Fig. 18, "Evening Peace," by Paul Dougherty the point of interest is clearly defined. The eye is at once attracted by the little cottage at the hillside. It holds our interest. The eye involuntarily returns to it. There are quite a number of shapes and lines and planes of different tonality (really more than necessary) in this picture. The eye would restlessly wander from place to place if the picture did not contain a starting or point of rest. By introducing this spot that is more conspicuous than anything else in this picture, the various parts combine harmoniously.



SEDGWICK AVE. (Fig. 21.) *Paul Fournier.*

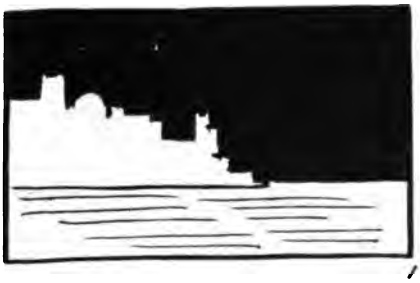


THE TREE-TOP HILL. (Fig. 17.) *W. D. Paddock.*

It would be impossible to point out such a spot in Fig. 17 or 20. In Fig. 19 it is furnished by the highlight on the creek. The picture would make an absolutely monotonous impression without it. In Fig. 24 it is the shimmer of moonlight on the water in the distance, and in Fig. 26 the elliptical shape of the lake. By far the best example of a point of interest is furnished by "A French Village," by George Michel. Title and point of interest cover each other. Another fair example is "Sedgwick Avenue," by Paul Fournier. There the vanishing point of the road into which all lines converge also explains the reason why the picture was taken, to show an uphill road with the vista of a building lost in mist. A road or a river dwindling away in the distance always furnishes a good point of interest. The Dutch landscape painters were fond of the symmetrical theme as shown in Diag. 19 which is strictly an arrangement of perspective. Also Fig. 24 is good in that respect. Modern painters somehow neglect the laws of perspective, *vide* Diag. 18, a landscape by Mauve. They strive more for accuracy of expression than of representation and prefer to convey distance and atmosphere by tone rather than by line. The laws of perspective are a study by themselves. The photographer can get along without them, as they are with him merely a selection of lines running to one point (Diag. 20). In Fig. 22 the light behind the rushes should furnish the point of interest, but it would be necessary to subdue the streak of light in the sky and foreground. In my opinion, a definite point of interest (although not absolutely necessary for the making of a good picture) will always improve a picture. It will concentrate the interest and explain the picture at the first glance.

The point of interest in well composed pictures will generally be found within the region of the dotted square, Diag. 16. It should never be exactly in the center or very near to it. It is situated most frequently somewhere near the two lower corners of the dotted square. Modern composition, however, has no strict rules in regard to this. In the so-called composition which will be discussed in Chapter IV, the point of the interest is often shifted to the very edge of the picture as indicated by the little squares in Diag. 16. The distance from the dotted lines to the edge of the picture is about one-third of the height of the picture.

Equally important as the point of interest, is, at times, the leading line idea. I divide line composition into four parts; outline or silhouette; parallelism of lines; curves, zigzag and undulating lines; and combinations of lines. We will first consider the silhouette. By silhouette I do not mean so much the representation of an object by mere outlines filled in with solid black (viz. Fig. 25) but rather an interesting outline of a dark plane against a lighter one. Fig. 25 is simply a clever stunt, not a picture. A good example of what the painters understand by silhouette we have in Diag. 19 and Fig. 26. There the outlines of the foliage against the sky really help to make the picture interesting. Every curve and undulation and change in the direction of the line has to be carefully considered. A successful silhouette is entirely a matter of selection. Corot was particularly clever in the handling of this feature of composition. He believed in big masses, the juxtaposition of one big dark shape against a smaller and lighter one. Travers' picture has some of



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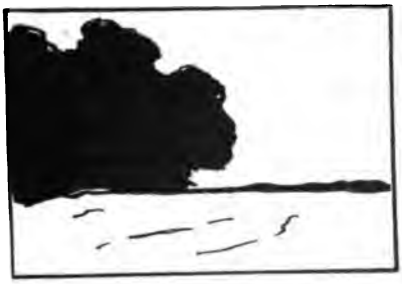

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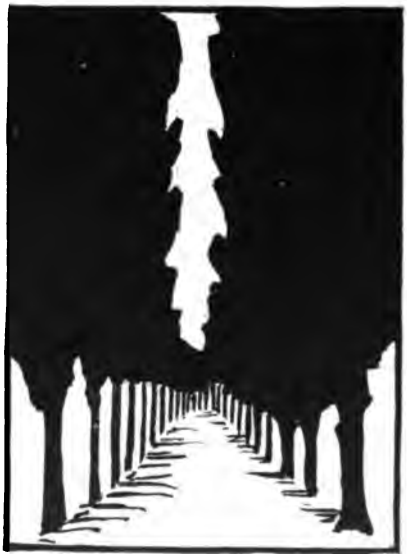

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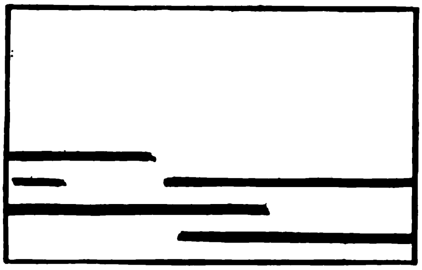

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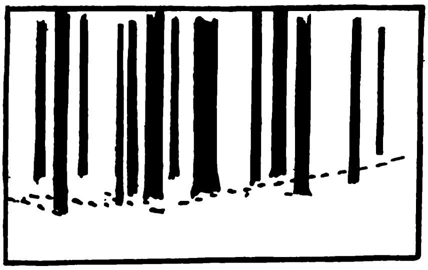

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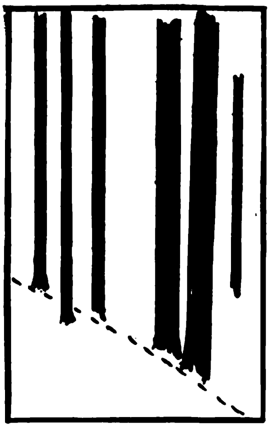

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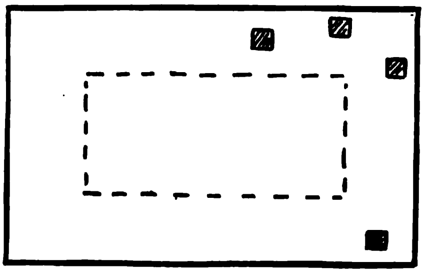

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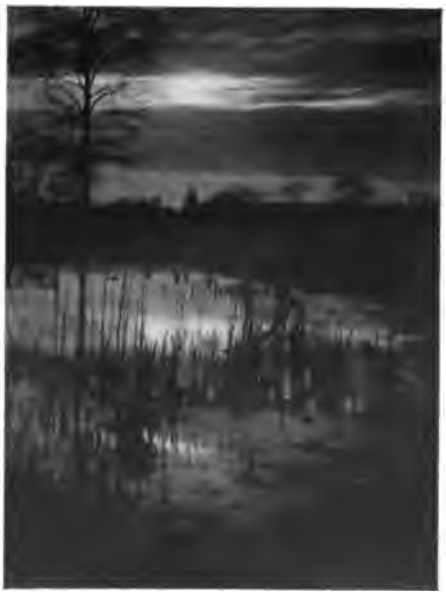
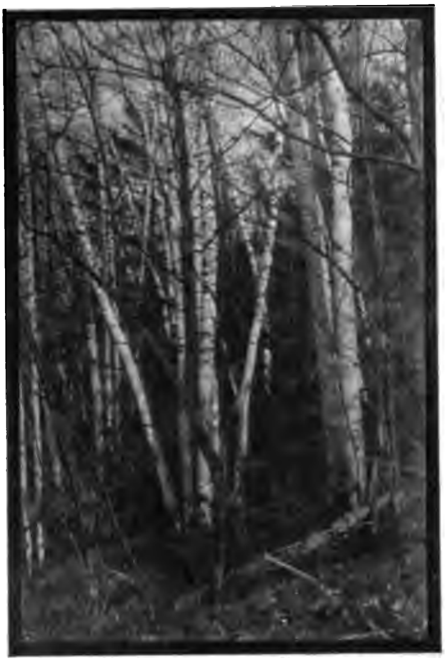
these characteristics, but Corot would not have shown so much of the sky. The "Moonrise," by Julian Rix, also shows two silhouettes, but the painter did not lay any particular strain upon them, and worked more upon the principle of balancing two dark spots than getting a striking silhouette.



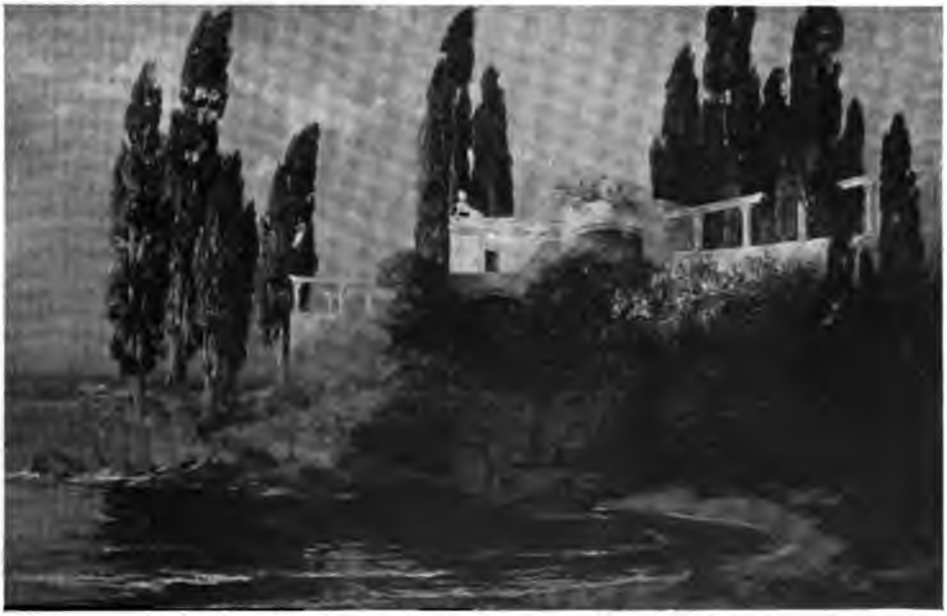
(Fig. 22.) *Paul Fournier.*

The silhouette is particularly valuable as a medium of expression in backgrounds for trees, shrubbery, buildings, or any decided mass that has a picturesque outline. Fig. 17, the "Tree Top Hill," by W. D. Paddock, seems to have been made solely for the purpose of showing an interesting silhouette. But the painter carefully evaded the monotonous effect of Fig. 25 by introducing detail into the trees and by placing them in a large light space. There is atmosphere in the picture. It is never advisable to sacrifice everything else for the exploitation of one single phase of composition. All the various methods of composition are so closely connected to each other that it is often exceedingly difficult to separate one from another. Fig. 21 represents a combination of the diagonal division of space with parallelism of vertical lines; Fig. 19 the parallelism of vertical lines with a high sky line and the triangular cut in the distance. Fig. 26 is an arrangement of diagonal composition, of an ellipse and silhouette forms. The latter have received the principal attention. To analyze pictures in this way will prove a beneficial pastime to every student of composition. You will always find that one method, generally the most conspicuous one, is the controlling factor in the composition and that all other elements are subordinate to it.

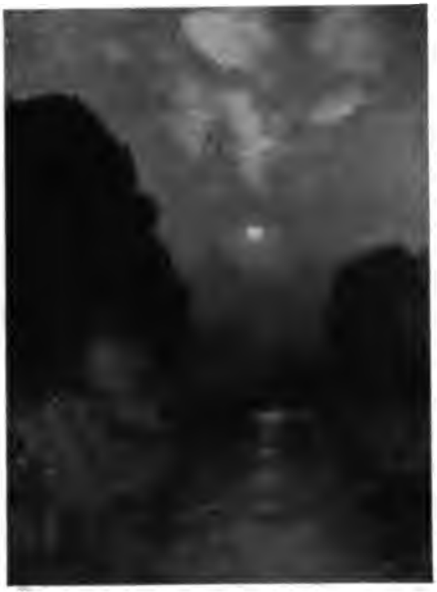


GROUP OF BIRCHES. (Fig. 23.) *Will H. Arnold.*

A silhouette is naturally supposed to be dark. But occasionally there are opportunities for introducing a light silhouette against a dark background, as suggested in Diag. 17, a moonlit city against a dark sky. Of course, it is really constructed on the same principle, as the outline is made by the sky as much as by the buildings.

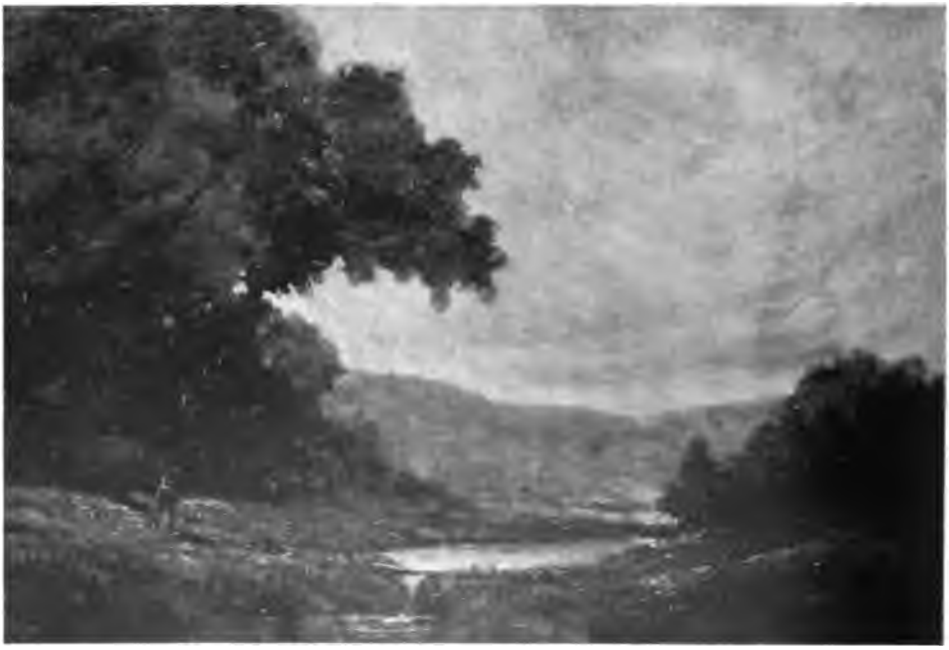


VILLA ON THE ADRIATIC. (Fig. 20.) *Alexander Mueller.*

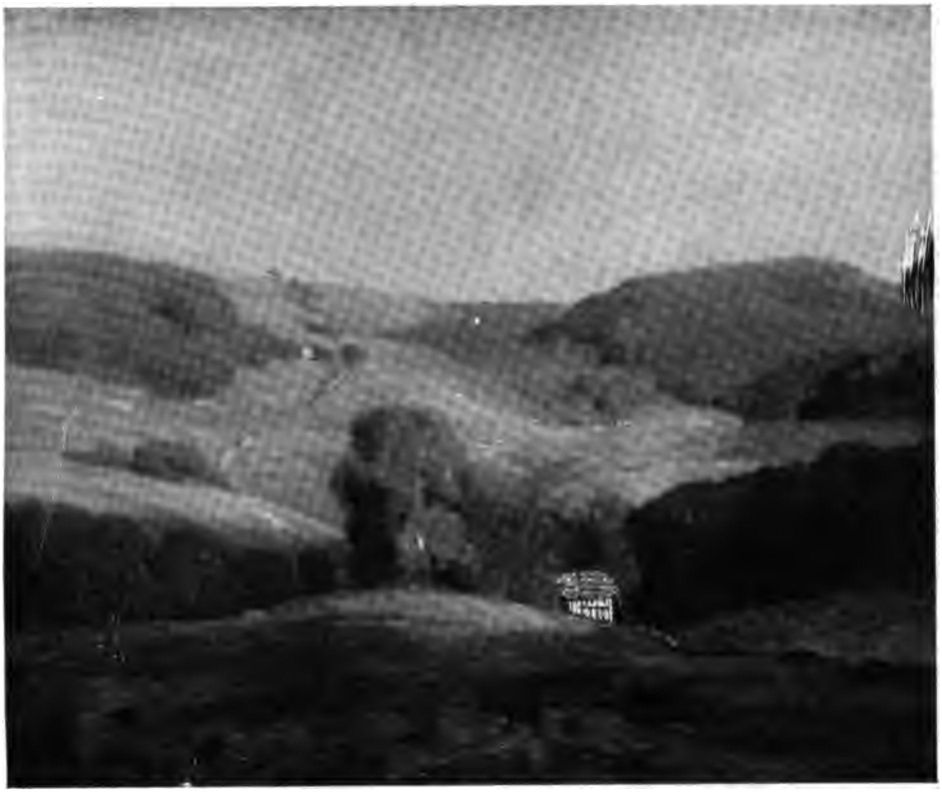


MOONRISE. (Fig. 24.) *Julian Rix.*

Perfect symmetry is not often met with in landscape art. Diagram 19 represents as near an approach to it as is possible. Of course, even there the forms are merely similar and not exactly alike. Pictures of this kind may have their use for decorative purposes, but the style can be hardly recommended for faithful reproductions of nature. The theme of Diag. 19 is one of the few that has proven successful, but it belongs to the old school of composition which is not much in favor in these days. Equally decorative, but entirely modern in its tendency is the parallelism of straight lines. It is of Japanese origin. Hiroshige, one of the great masters of landscape design, has based some of his best work on simple line ideas, Diag. 15. The parallelism of vertical lines is the most popular form. It is more pictorial and pleasing to the eye than the parallelism of horizontal lines. Diagram 14 shows a scheme that has been repeatedly used by Puvis de Chavannes in his mural decorations.



THE SOURCE OF THE HOUSATONIC (Fig. 26.) *Geo. A. Travers.*

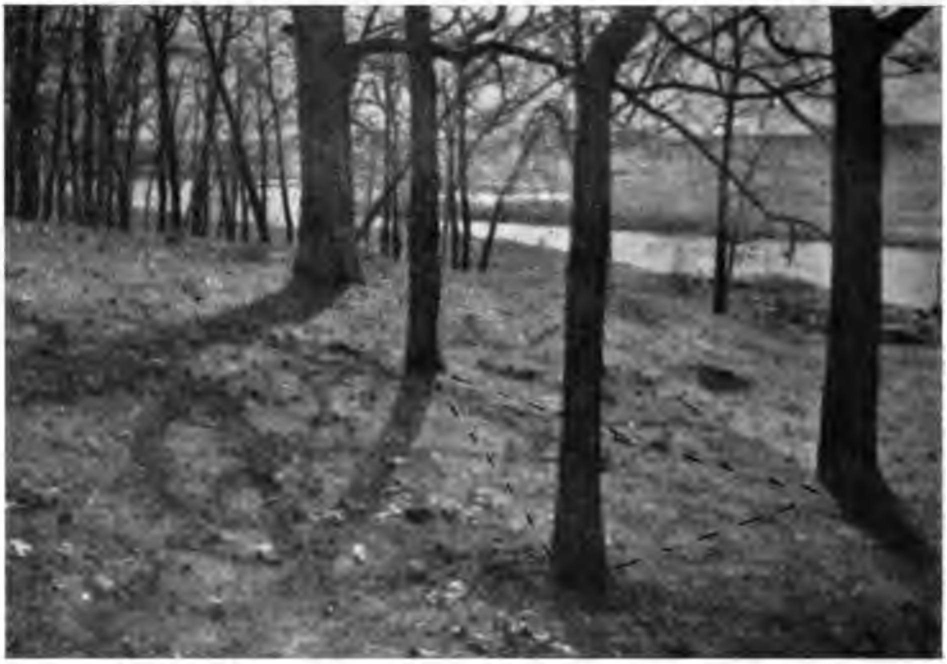


EVENING PEACE. (Fig. 18.) *Paul Dougherty.*

To alternate lines of different width and length will always prove effective. There is a certain rhythmical, one might even say musical, quality to it. J. H. Field, of Berlin, Wis., utilized the same motif in his "Decorative Study." You will notice in this picture, as well as in Diag. 14, that the bases of the tree trunks, whenever three are grouped together, form a triangular shape. It lends variety to the uniformity of lines and a good draughtsman always remembers this. Also the photographer should pay special attention to this curious detail in the selection of his subjects.

The parallelism of vertical lines is specially suited for woodland scenes and might also be utilized in the depiction of telegraph poles in street scenes and on country roads, or of ship masts in wharf scenes, etc.

The parallelism of horizontal lines is rarely met with. As few horizontal lines in nature are exactly parallel a composition carrying out this scheme always looks a trifle forced and rigid. One American landscape painter, D. W. Tryon, is one of the few who has mastered this style. His line idea is somewhat like that shown in diagram 13. Of course they are not absolutely straight in his paintings, but many run in a horizontal direction. Fig. 22 exemplifies this principle. You can count in it about eight parallel horizontal lines. The photographer was wise in selecting the upright shape for this



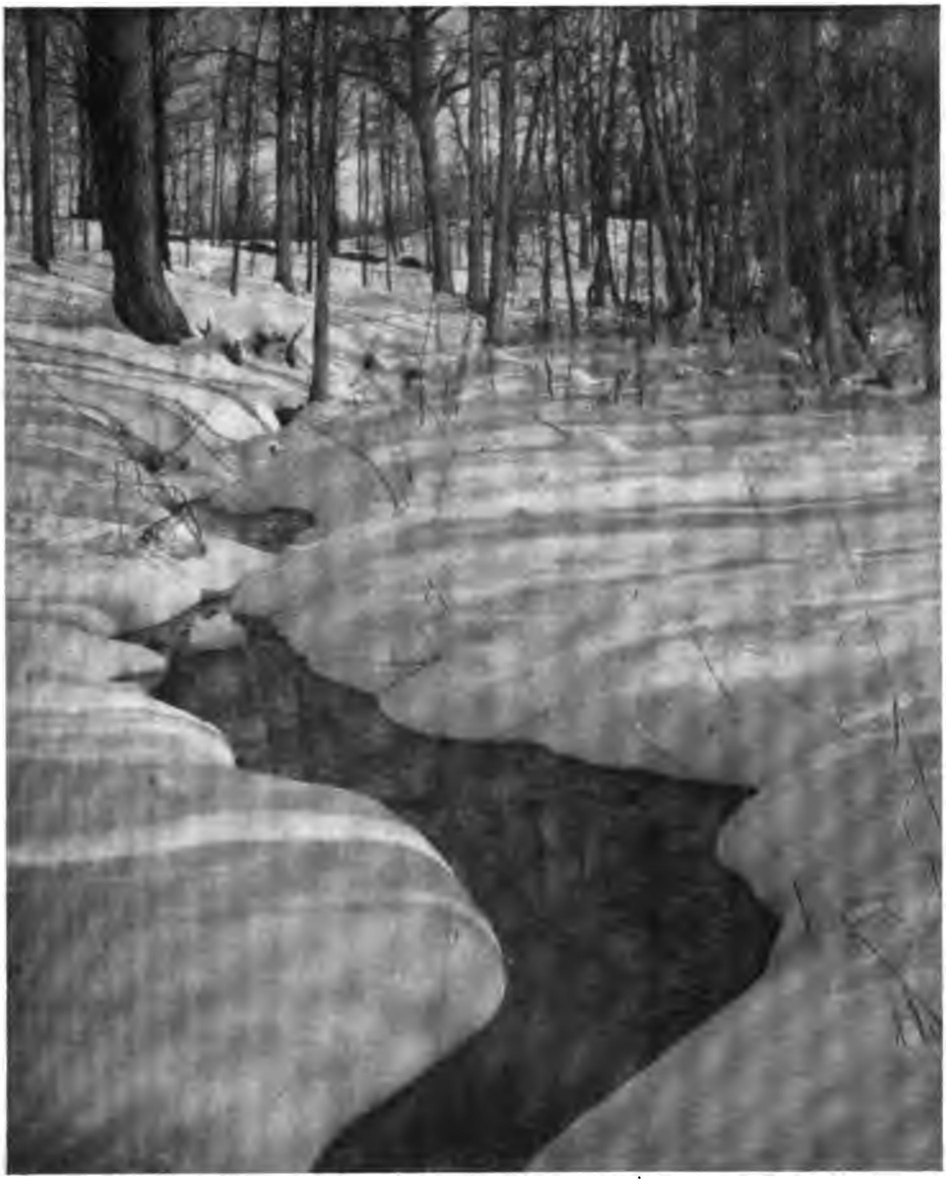
DECORATIVE STUDY. (Fig. 19.) J. H. Field.

experiment. The repetition of lines would prove too monotonous in an oblong. This line idea resembles the horizontal composition of Chapter II, with the difference that it breaks up the dark masses into horizontal strata, which was not the case in the Gay picture, Fig. 11.

The "Group of Birches," by W. H. Arnold, represents a study of lines of a vertical tendency, of which the majority, however, have a slant or an undulating quality. A cluster of trees like this is pleasing to the eye, but does not offer sufficient material to make a picture. The interest lies entirely in the picturesqueness of the tree trunks. There is no sky line, no point of interest, and no other element of composition to relieve the jumble of lines.

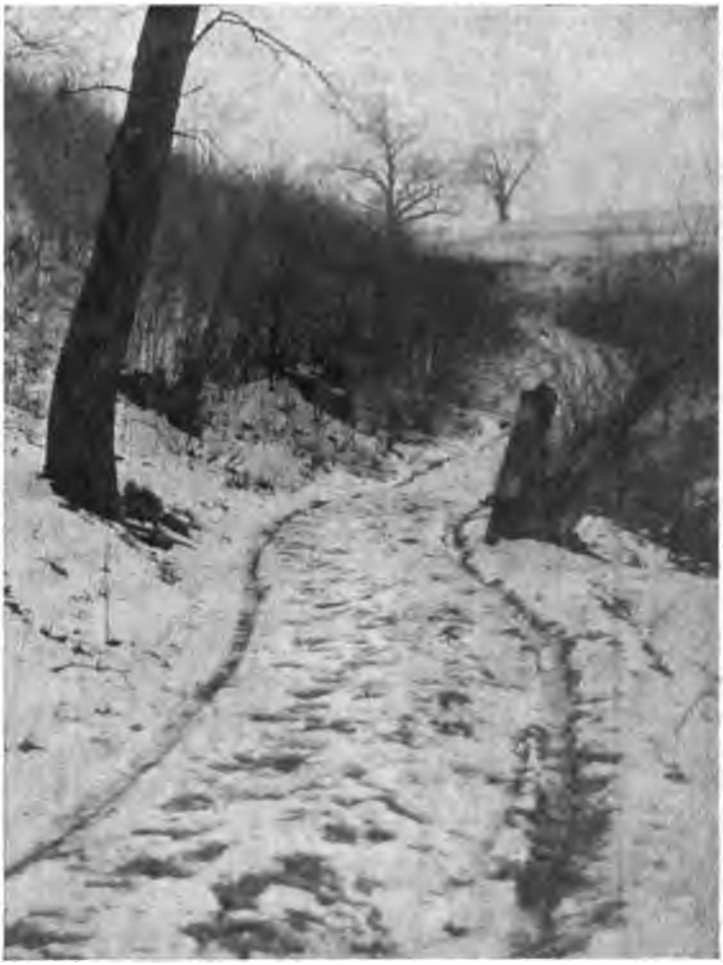
In Alexander Mueller's "Villa on the Adriatic," we have the parallelism of slightly undulating lines (shapes or silhouettes) of a vertical tendency. The lines are finely selected and cut the space into a few areas of beautiful proportions. It furthermore applies the diagonal principle with the introduction of the triangular cut, but strange to say has, despite its elaborateness, no decided point of interest.

The readers of these discussions will notice that I put special stress upon the elements that underly the beauty of representation. The clearer your ideas are on the various methods of construction and arrangement, the more beautiful your results will be. In selecting a landscape, carefully study the various forms of nature before you, and determine at once which method of composition will prove the most advantageous for illustrating it.



LATE AFTERNOON IN WINTER. [Fig. 39.] *Rudolph Eickemeyer, Jr.*

charmed by a group of trees, there by a farmhouse rising upon a lonely hill. A bit of pasture, haystacks, a deserted cottage, or a path losing itself in a field was sufficient to attract him. However, insignificant the motives were, he understood how to imbue them with character and atmosphere, and often the simplest sketch sufficed him to suggest poetry and space.

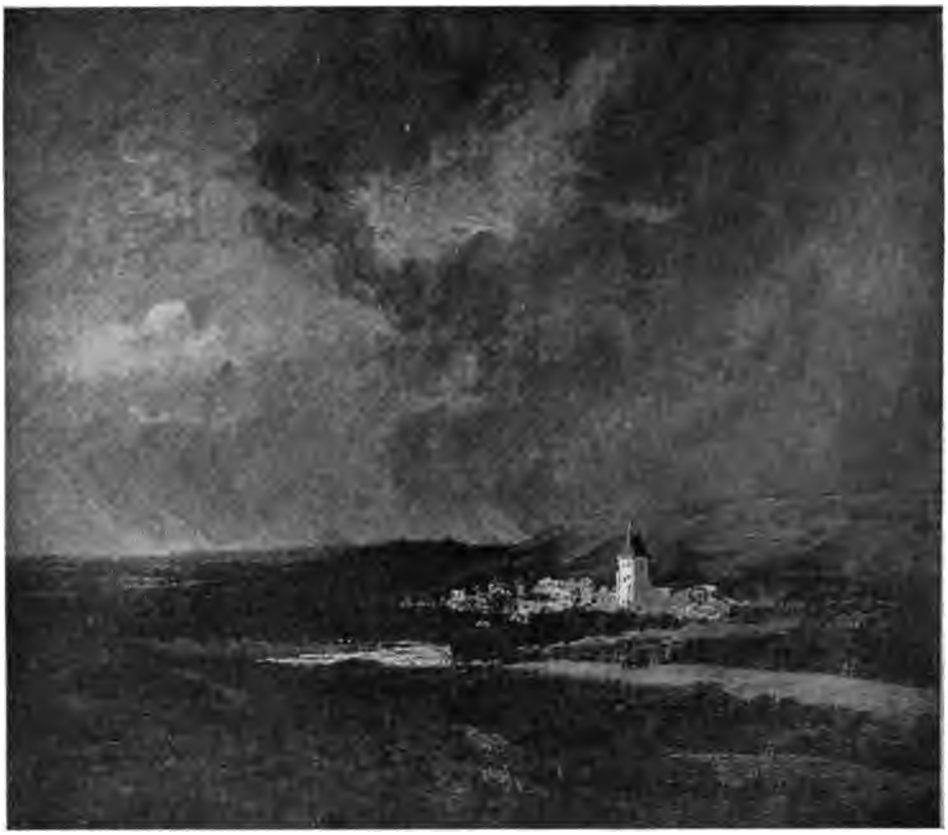


FEBRUARY. (Fig. 37.) *C. Y. Abbott.*

other novel line arrangements. But I do not wish to assume the part of an innovator. I could merely point them out and would not know whether they are really applicable to our ideas of art. A writer on composition can only prove his case by analyzing typical and standard forms whose importance has been determined by frequent application. The usefulness of new conceptions is a matter of experiment and must be left entirely to the artists and craftsmen of the camera.

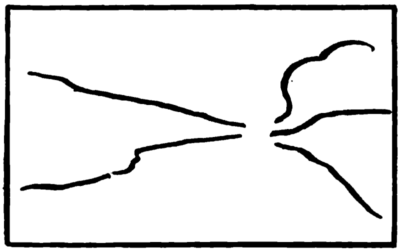
The simplest subjects are always the best. Any person with his eyes open, and with sympathy for the time, place, and conditions in which he lives, has only to take a walk or to board a trolley, to find a picture worthy of depiction. A survey of your own neighborhood may prove as profitable as the farthest excursion.

Should you ever have the opportunity to get hold of one of Constable's sketch books you will see that he seized upon the simplest things. Here he is



A FRENCH VILLAGE. (Fig. 27.) *George Michel.*

Perhaps the easiest and most practical way to improve one's judgment, whether the subject or the scenery before him contains the elements of a good picture or not, is to follow the advice which the painter, William M. Chase, gives to his pupils. Make a small empty frame of blackened cardboard or any convenient material; carry it with you whenever you are photographically inclined, and look through it at those things that interest you. You will begin to see everything in pictures, clean cut by the four boundary lines of the frame; and as soon as you move the frame from one side to another, all nature will seem to you to be divided into innumerable pictorial fragments. There is a good motif, you think; so it is, but shift the frame a little to the right or to the left or upwards or downwards. As the boundary line changes, the picture changes. Do you like it better now than before? If the fragment of nature which you see through the frame conveys something to you, well and good; if it doesn't, try again with another part of the scene.



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This is, of course, a very primitive way of getting at the laws of composition, but it is a very reliable one, and it will not play you false as long as you have confidence enough in your judgment. Try to analyze the arrangement of each scene into parts, into lines, planes, and the gradations of one tone into the other. It will develop and perfect your own faculties, no matter whether you are a mere beginner or an accomplished craftsman.

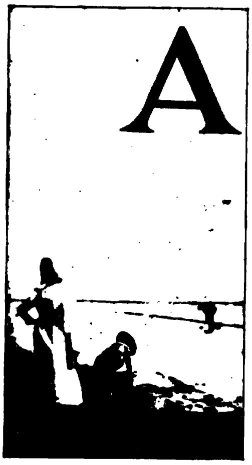
Use your critical acumen, not necessarily to find fault or to accept as infallible the picture before you, but simply to develop and perfect your own faculties.

If you want to go deeper into the subject procure a good book on composition and study it. They are rather scarce, but can be found. The two most helpful works on composition at the disposal of the American landscape photographer are at present, "Pictorial Composition," by Henry A. Poore. and "Composition," by A. W. Dow.

SILHOUETTE. **(Fig. 25.)** *Paul Fournier.*

CHAPTER IV.

Seven Line Combinations.—The Curve and Half Circles.—The Zigzag Line.—Space Composition.—Undulating Lines.—Rhythm.—Odd Forms of Line Conception.—With Fourteen Illustrations and Nine Diagrams.



A LINE is either straight or curved. A straight line runs either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally across the picture. A curved line can not be so easily defined and a large part of this paper will be devoted to its various forms. But it also can run only in three directions, the same as the straight line.

Diagram 21 really presents all line combinations that are possible. We have become acquainted with several of them. *A* represents the rectangular idea which we have seen in Fig. 16 and the parallelism of vertical lines; *B* is one of the most ordinary forms. Any hill, mountain, roof of a house, or diagonally running plane cutting into the horizontal shows the characteristics of this combination. "The Marshes," by Jules Dupré, Fig. 29, displays the three undulating lines of *C*. The horizontal one frequently occurs in clouds. *F* is similar to *C*, and can be studied in any hillside covered with trees or shrubbery. It is apt

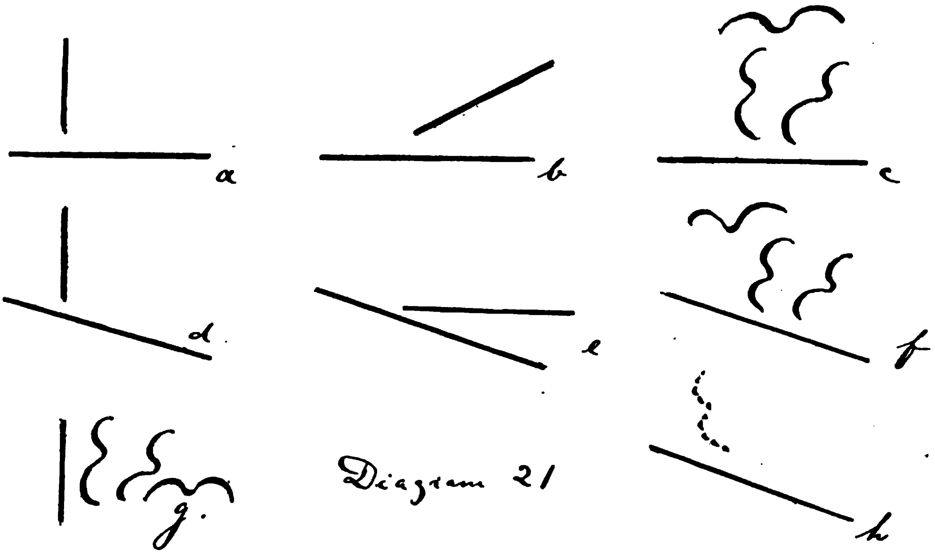
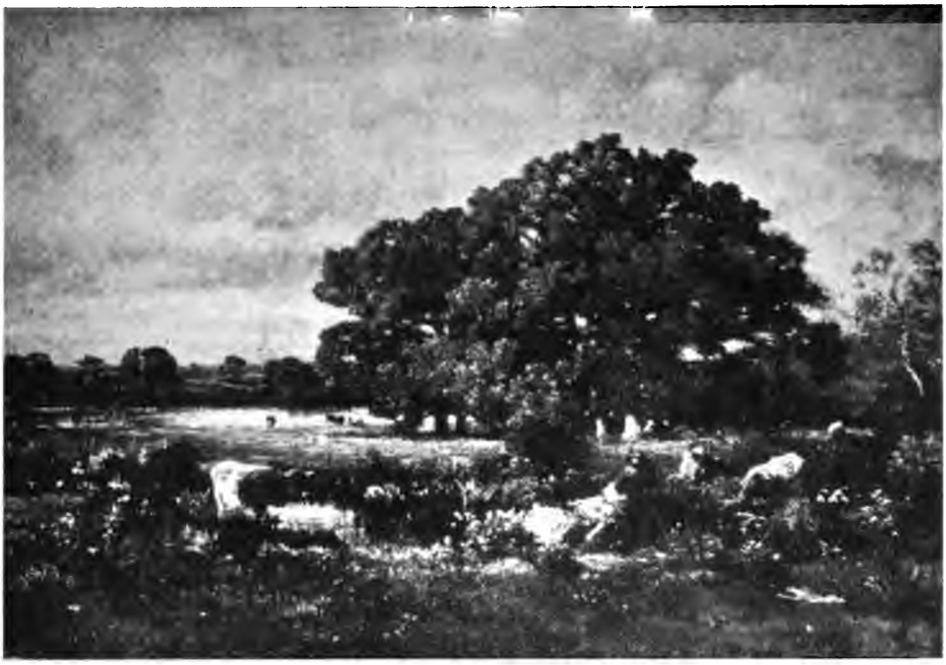
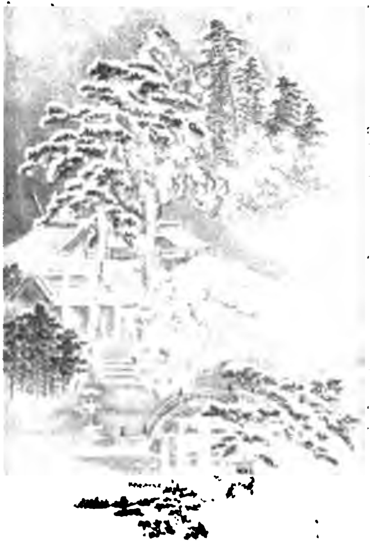


Diagram 21



THE MARSHES. (Fig. 29.) Jules Dupre.

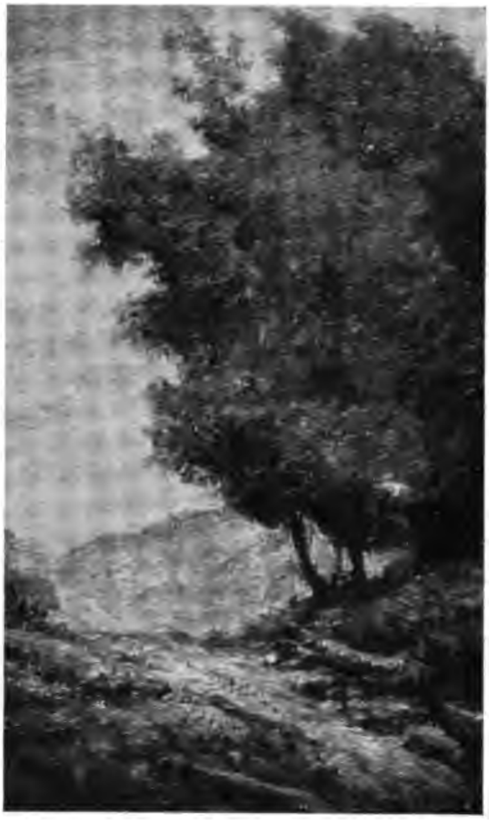


(Fig. 40.)

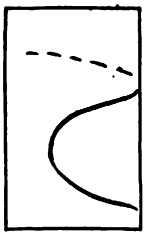
to be more graceful than the *C* combination. Of course the diagonal line can also run in the direction from the left upper to the right lower corner as shown in the dotted line of *H*, and in Geo. A. Travers' "Old Road." But this is merely a case of reversing and not a new combination. The line idea *D* is offered in C. H. White's "Telegraph Poles." Diag. 15 in the last chapter, carried out the same principle. "Highbridge," by H. W. Ranger, shows the diagonal line with a horizontal line cutting into it. Any headland with the sea behind, or hillside with a valley below will offer a variation of this combination. The combination of *G* is of all the rarest one. Of course a wall or tree trunk with a bush or a stack of new mown hay could produce one or the other variation but the lines do not go well together. *B, D, E,* and *F* are undoubtedly the easiest and most graceful combinations.

Every one of these combinations, no doubt, has its own individuality, *i. e.,* faculty of expressing certain moods of nature and the human mind. Each will lend itself to the depiction of certain subjects and objects better than others. But the scope of my article does not permit me to go into details, nor would be much gained thereby. I would be obliged to show too many examples, which would only prove confusing to the reader. I can not repeat often enough that composition can not be taught. Only a few facts can be given, and hints and suggestions how to utilize them.

The curve and half circle, as I will endeavor to show, are merely variations of the zigzag line. Fig. 33 shows a clever use of the half circle but it is really a variation of Diag. 25. In Diag. 22 I show the half circle with its dotted extension that can easily be traced in the photograph. The same is the case with Bullock's, "The Brook." The beginning of the curve formed by the trees on the hillside is taken up and finished by the brook. It has a beautiful bold sweep, but if analyzed it will show that it is nothing else but the part of a zigzag line. Also the "Cazenovia Creek," by Paul Fournier, a composition which utilizes the double undulation, so familiar in brook pictures, in a novel manner has the zigzag line as fundamental principle.



OLD ROAD. (Fig. 28.) *Geo. A. Travers.*



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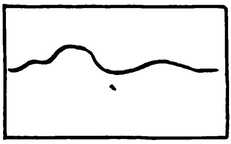

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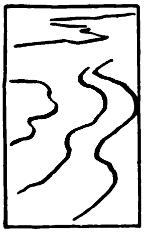

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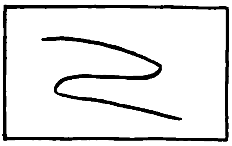

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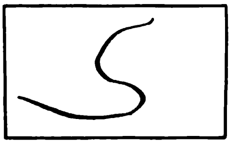

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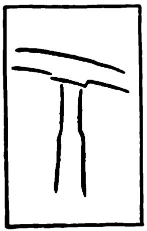

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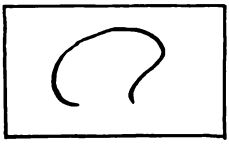

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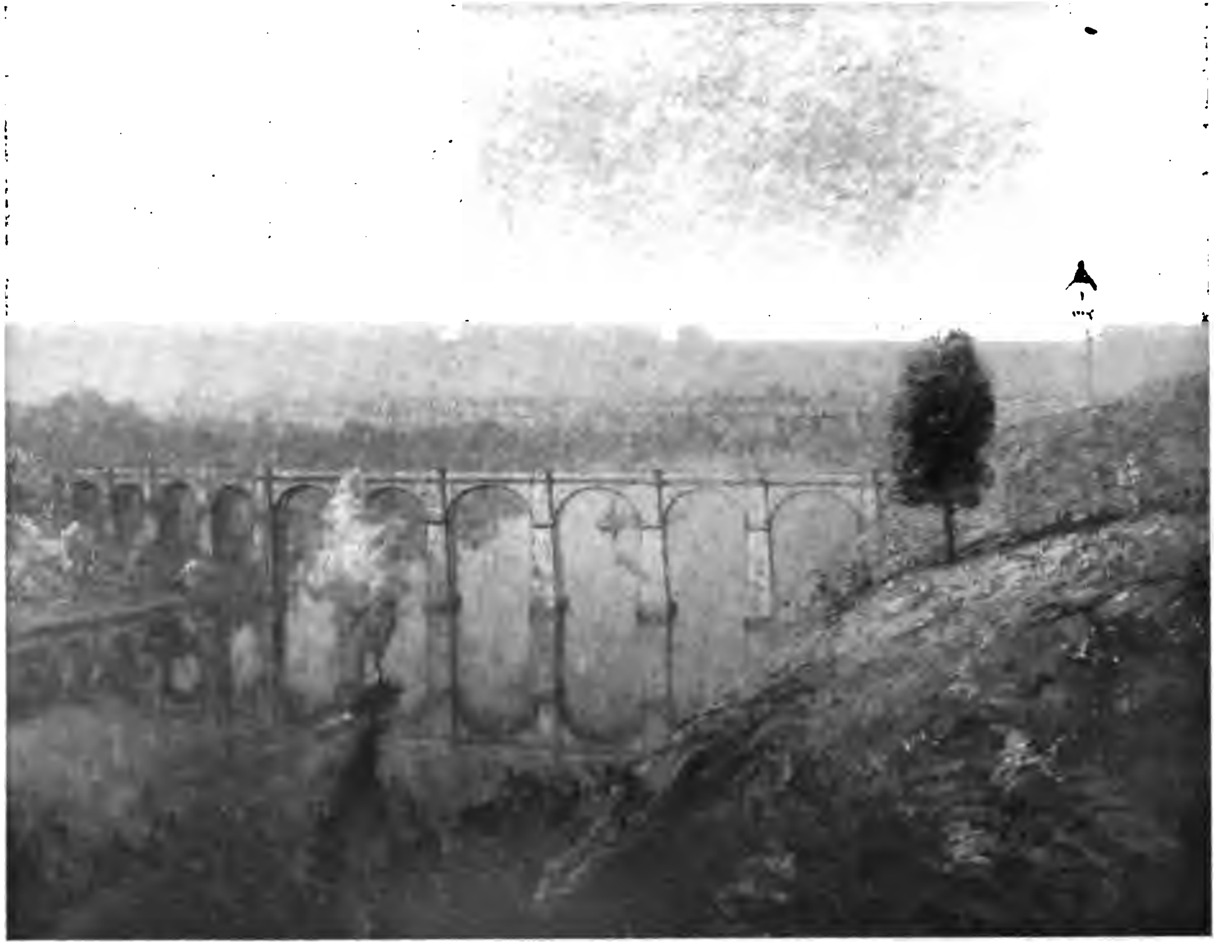
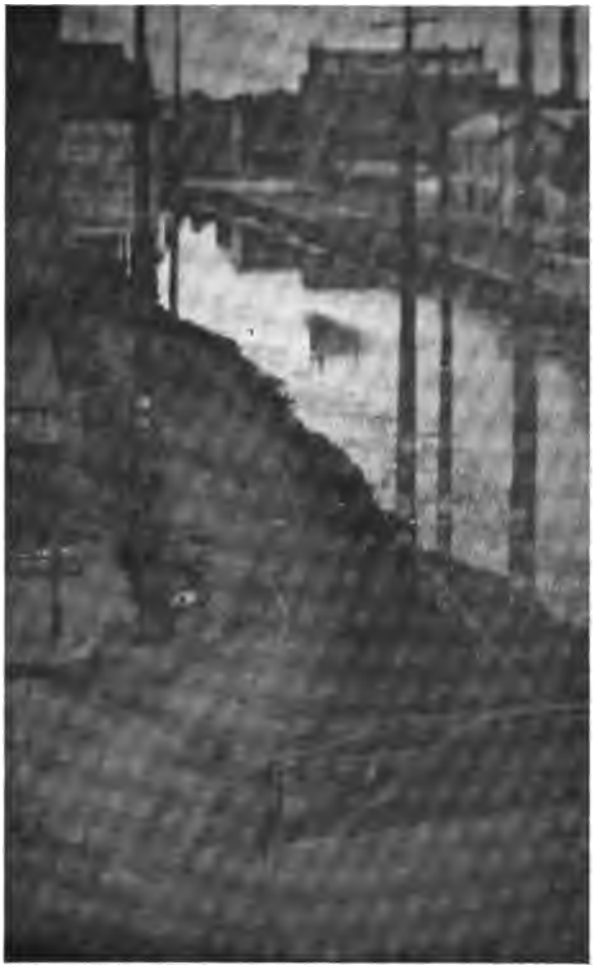
The zigzag line, equivalent to the *S* line of other writers on composition, is undoubtedly the most useful and pliable of all lines. It has a vague resemblance to the letter *S* (Diag. 25 and 26) but it is more crushed, flattened out in appearance. And



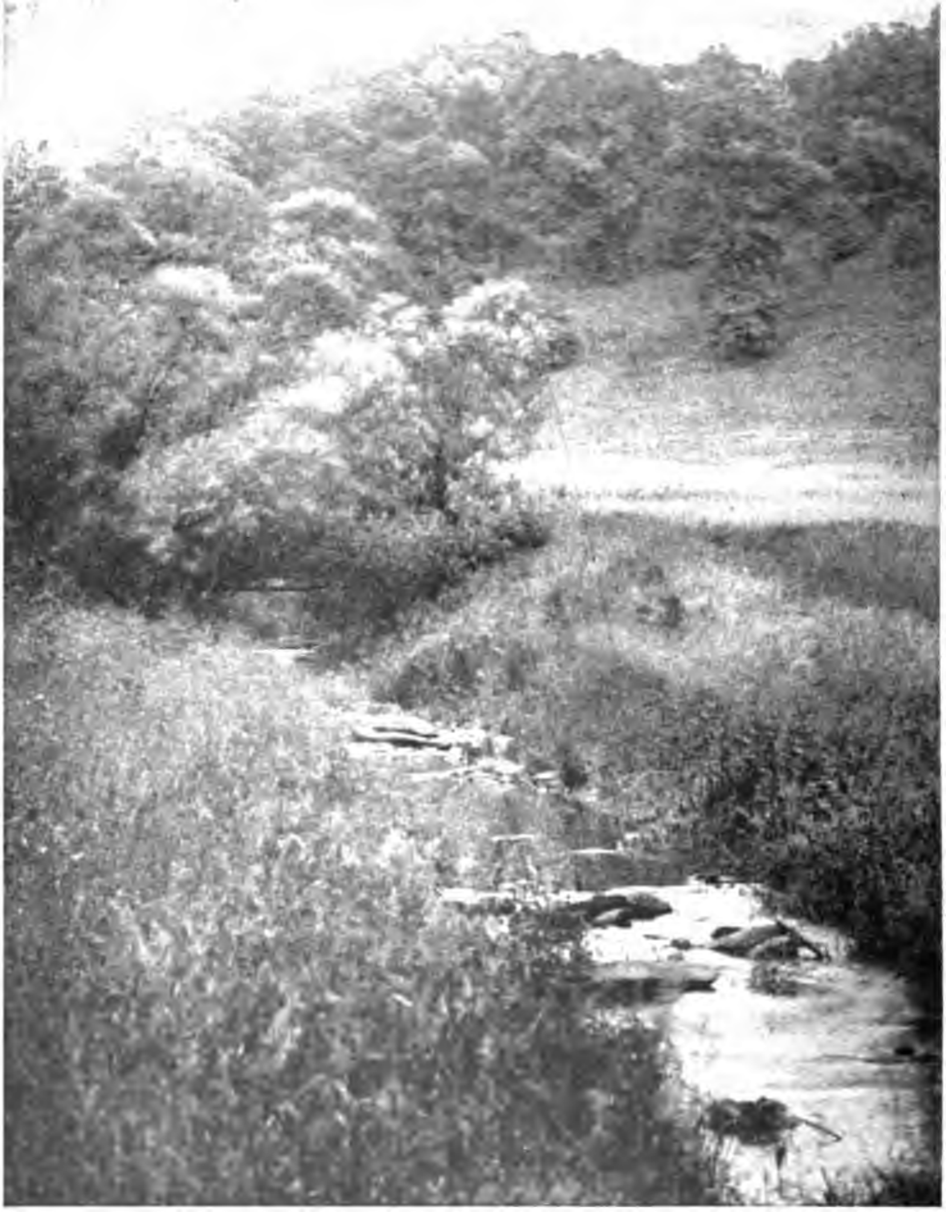
HIGHBRIDGE. (Fig. 30.) *H. W. Ranger.*


TELEGRAPH POLES. (Fig. 31.) C. H. White.

the more flattened out it is the better it is in most cases for the composition (viz. Fig. 5). It is the most important factor in space composition. It is apt to break up the whole picture into triangular cuts (Fig. 32) which if rightly balanced lend a rare picturesque quality to the objects depicted. In Fig. 32 you will notice four distinct triangular cuts. In Fig. 36 by Yarnall Abbott there are even more but they are more broken and cut up and subdued by clever differentiation of tones.

The zigzag line is one of the great principles of Japanese art. It recurs oftener than any other. The kakemono painting by Hoyen (Fig. 40) is typical of Japanese landscape art. They consider the shape so beautiful that they use it without any embellishment. It stands by itself. As we are not masters of silhouetting (photographically speaking), as the Japanese, we do not dare to use the zigzag in its isolated form, but can merely apply it as a vehicle of space composition.

The undulating line as long as it runs horizontally as in Diag. 23 is an independent medium of expression. It is a beautiful reproducer of sky lines and undulating ground and the waves of the sea. But when it runs in a vertical or rather diagonal direction across the picture (Diag. 24) it easily assumes a zigzag tendency, of course with modifications. The undulating line consist not so much of clear sweeping curves, but of short curves, sudden breaks, darts, bends, and undulations, continually changing their direction. Only the underlying form will vaguely resemble the S-shape and simply for the reason that S-shape is one of the most beautiful forms known to pictorial composition. The photographer with good taste will involuntarily and unconsciously select his line idea. Figs. 38 and 39 by Rudolf Eickemeyer, one

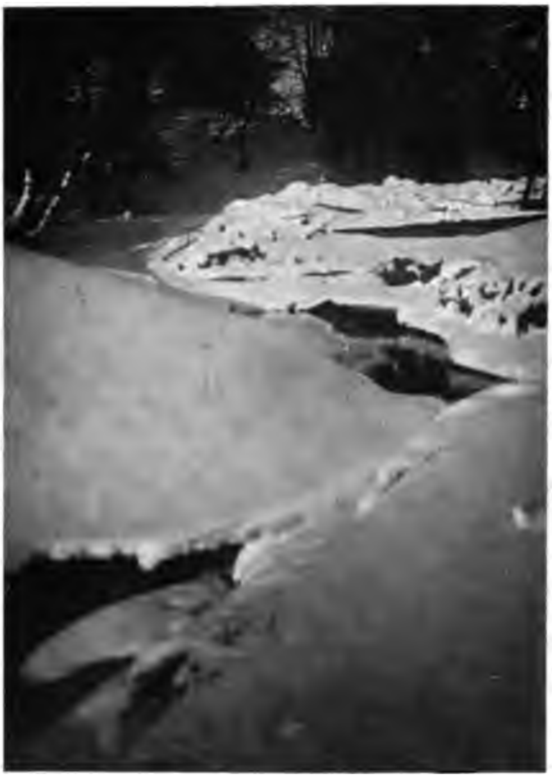


THE BROOK. [Fig. 34.] ***John T. Bullock.***

of our great American landscape photographers, shows an excellent applicating of the undulating line. "The Summer Morning," Fig. 38, with its high sky line, its point of interest way up near the horizon and the large empty space below is a composition strictly Japanese in character. The sky line in space composition is generally placed rather high, the treatment demands it, as one of the principal charms of space composition consists in large planes without much differentiation of tone. There must be made room for them. Also the point of interest is much nearer to the edge of the picture than in other compositions. What we want in space arrangement is not merely the suggestion of

LONELY BIRCH TREE. [Fig. 33.] *Paul Fournier.*

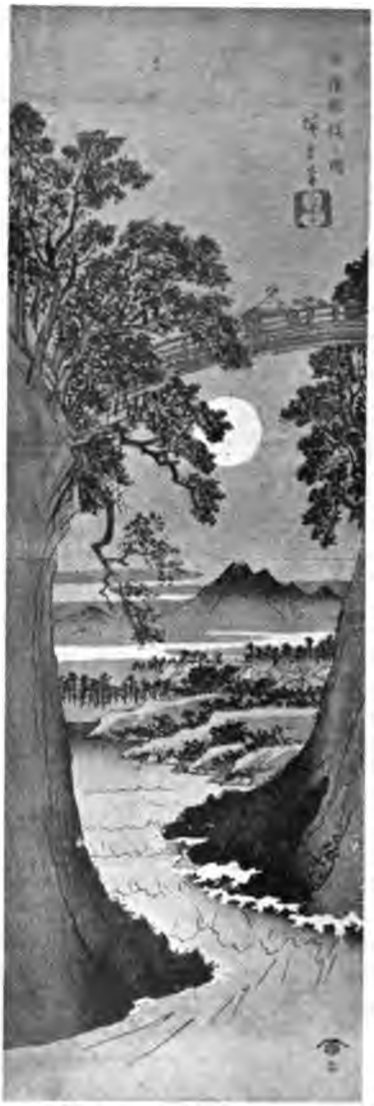
CAZENOVIA CREEK. [Fig. 41.] *Paul Fournier.*



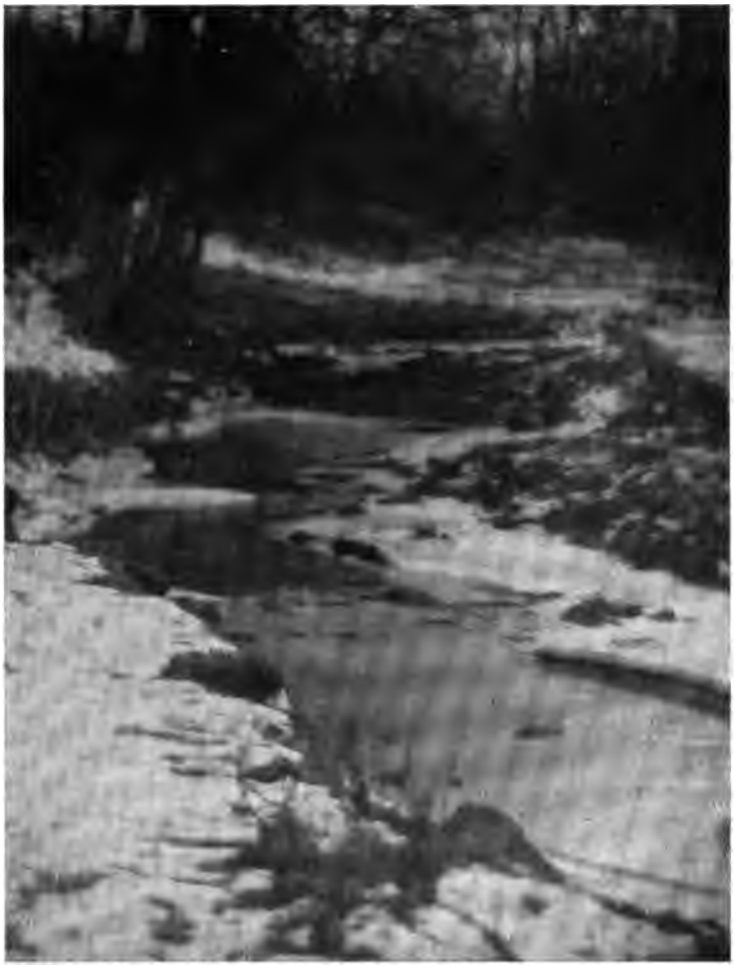
SNOW SCENE. [Fig. 32.] *Paul Fournier.*

space but actual large areas of space of beautiful proportion on the surface of the picture. Fig. 39 is a clever combination of the parallelism of vertical line in the upper part of the picture and two undulating lines dividing the lower space. The latter contains few triangular forms but rather half circular forms. In both pictures the zigzag shape controls the flow of the undulating lines. It is equally palpable in the ruts of the snow-covered road by Yarnall Abbott, Fig. 37. As I have said before there is no escape from it as long as you make use of undulating lines.

The beauty of a line analyzed in detail depends largely on accentuation. Diag. 29 will explain what I mean by accentuation. It is the same as in Diag. 23. There it is throughout of equal strength, and looks rather bold. In Diag. 29 the same line gains life and expression by the introduction of a few dark accents or spots. This produces what painters call rhythm. Study the various illustrations of this article, and you will see how a line is improved by a few dark or light accents. There is no emphasis whatever in the curves in Figs. 33 and 41. They are deficient in that respect. In Figs. 32 and 39 there are highlights as well



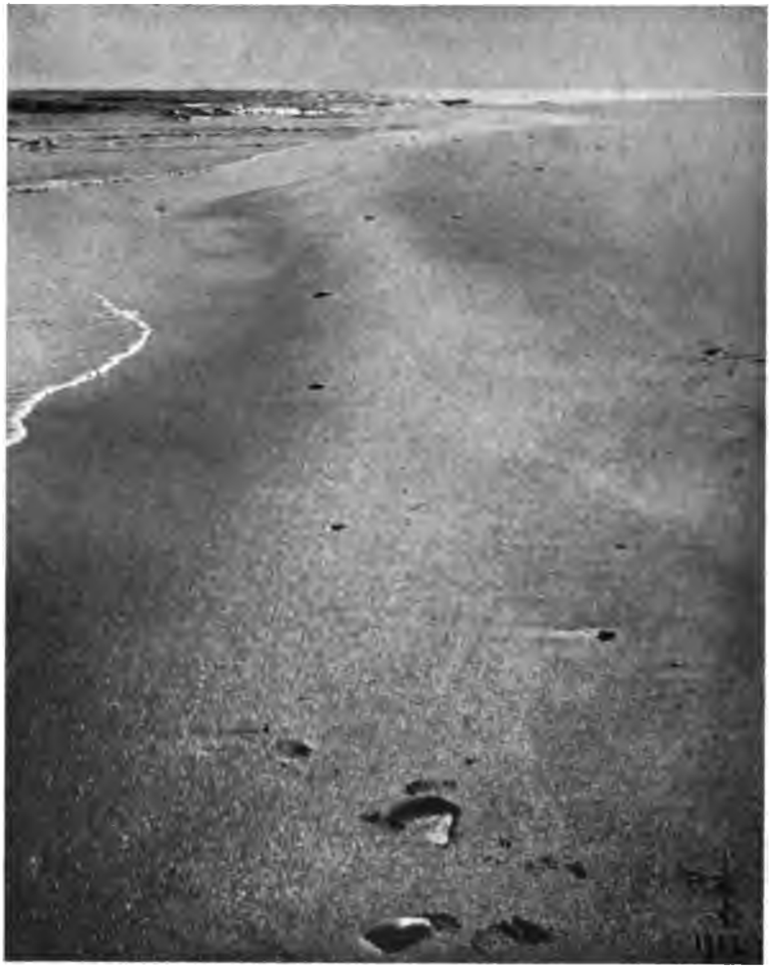
[Fig. 35.]



THE BROOK—WINTER. [Fig. 36.] *C. Yarnall Abbott.*

as dark spots which help the rhythm of the lines. Particularly fortunate in this respect are Figs. 34 and 38. In Fig. 34 where the line is rather suggested than actually seen, the shadows of the trees almost produce a break in the middle of the curve, and it is continued by contrast of tone in the stones and surface of the water. Fig. 38 represents a clever and originally conceived line which is accentuated by white. The end of the line at the left side of the picture is particularly happy.

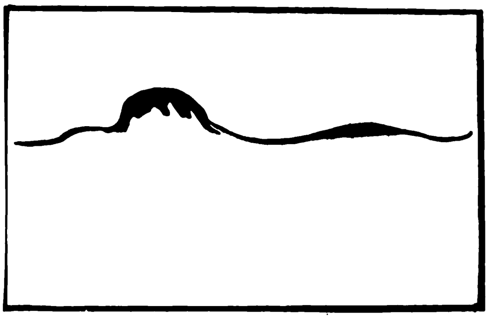
There are quite a number of oddly shaped lines that can not easily be classified. We are slowly adapting them from Eastern art. Any photographer who will take the trouble of studying the colored woodcuts of Hokusai and Hiroshige will find ample material for new and startling conceptions. Diag. 27, a clear curve, supported by two rectangles has become familiar to all of us through Whistler's famous "Battersea Bridge." Nothing simpler and



A SUMMER MORNING. [Fig. 38.] *Rudolph Eickemeyer, Jr.*

more beautiful can be imagined, but it is difficult to imitate, as there are few objects suitable for this kind of treatment.

Another curious effect can be obtained by applying the line of Diag. 28. The objects of the foreground form an irregular frame for the vista beyond. Hokusai shows us the effect of it in one of his pictures, Fig. 35.



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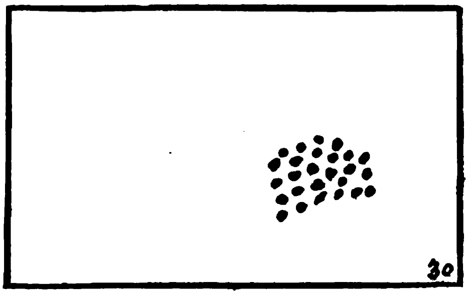
It would be easy to take a few Japanese prints from Hiroshige's Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido or Hokusai's Hundred Views of Fusiyama and show you several

CHAPTER V.

A Method of Spotting.—A Definition of Tone.—A Light and Shade Composition.— Repetition. — With Eleven Illustrations and Four Diagrams.

IN the last chapter I have shown how a line can be emphasized by accentuating any part of it by a light or dark spot. The same may be accomplished in a plane, or even an entire picture (as has become customary of late) by the introduction of larger dots and shapes generally of a dark tonality.

In color it is more effective than in black and white, but even in monochrome one might get certain decorative results. Compositions of this kind are generally divided into several clearly defined shapes of flat tones (rather than gradations) and the dark spots are placed where they look most effective. The dark spots should never assume large proportions, nor can they be of very small or equal size. A feeling of restlessness is produced in the human eye by a group of small dark spots (Diag. 30). They only grow into a harmony if arranged in some geometrical shape (Diag. 31). Of two comparatively large dark (or light) shapes one should always be subordinated to the other one, although in most cases, it is not necessarily the smaller one. In Diag. 32 the shape which occupies the smaller area also looks the smallest. But in Fig. 33 where it is a trifle larger one is in doubt which is the most important. There is not enough difference between the two shapes.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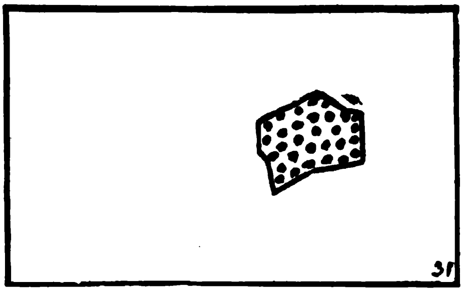
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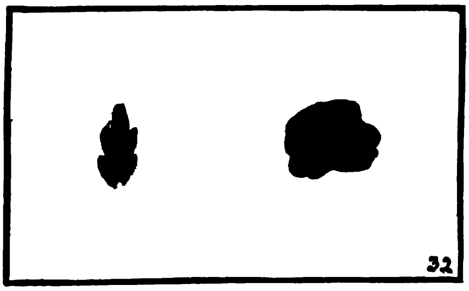
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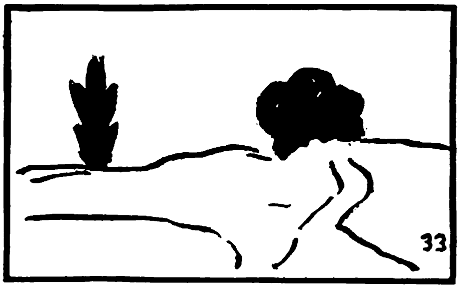
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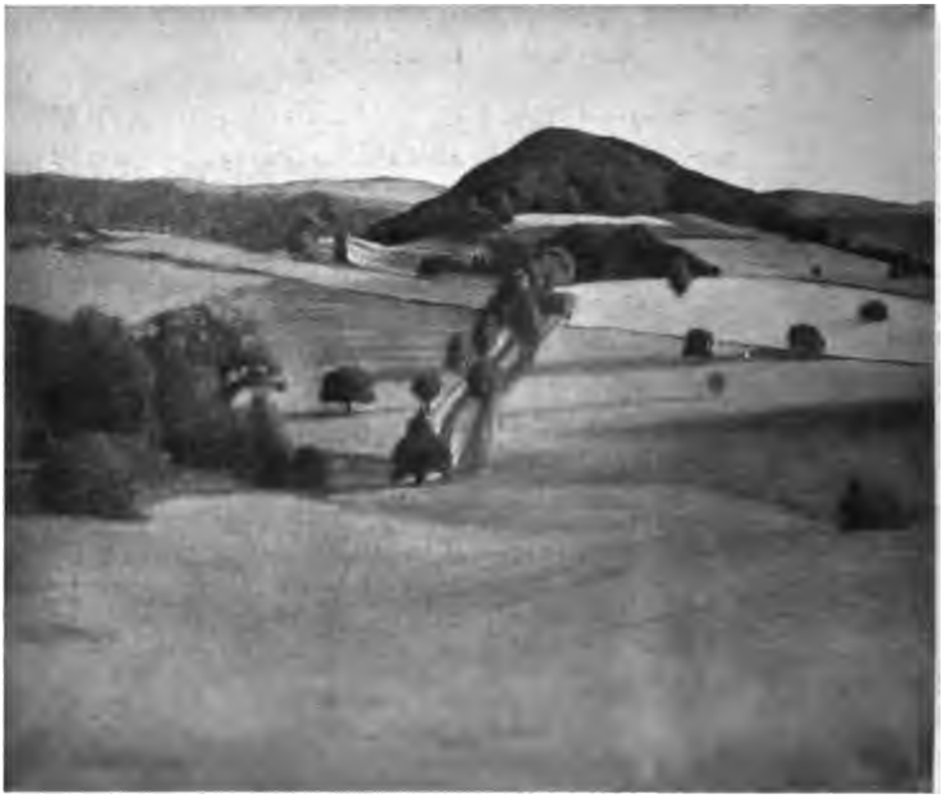
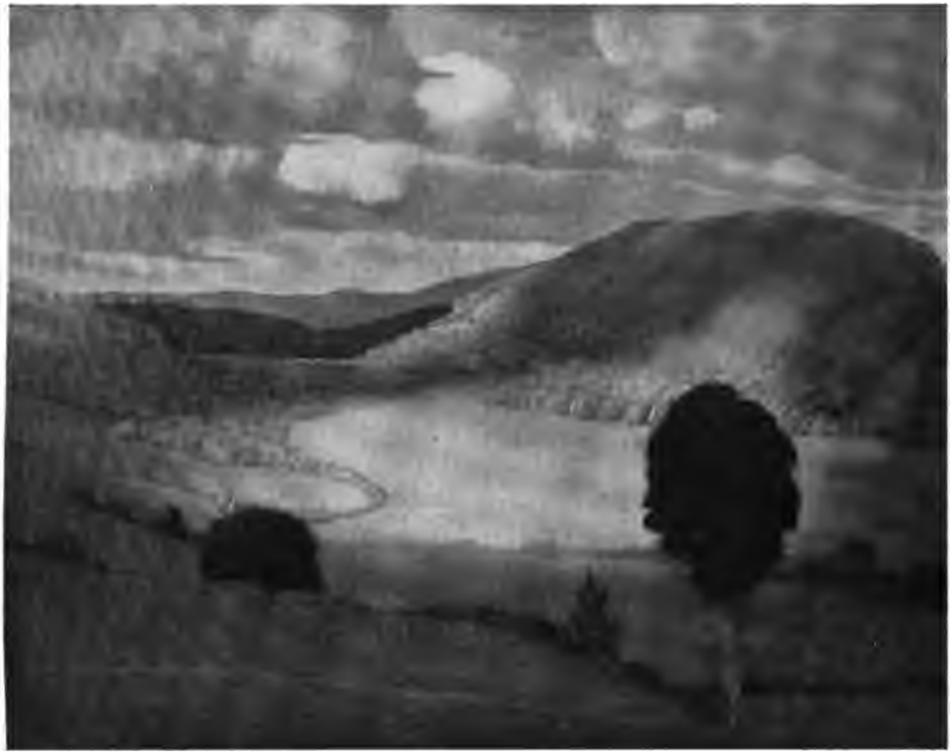


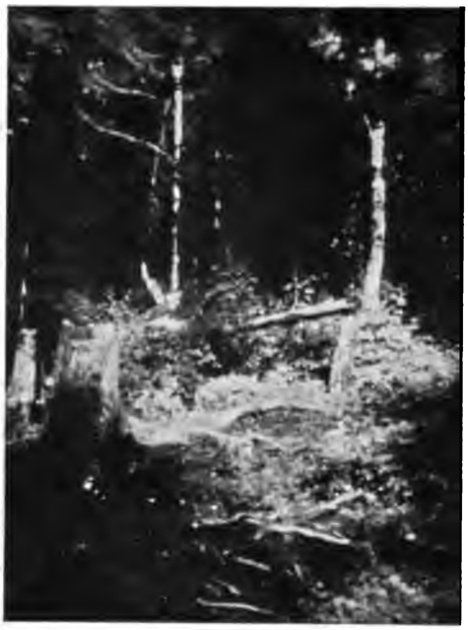
CONNECTICUT HILLS. [Fig. 42.] *W. H. Paddock.*

Two excellent examples of this method of spotting are the two paintings, "Connecticut Hills" (Fig. 42), and "The Valley" (Fig. 43), by W. H. Paddock, one of our younger American landscapists. I myself do not fancy this style particularly, as it conventionalizes form too much. It does not show nature's forms as they are, but trims them like an Italian landscape gardener to obtain a certain effect. For decorative purposes it is excellent and might be used with modification in landscape photography. It would add one valuable quality which is generally absent in photographic landscape, and that is color. The different shapes should be in different tonal degrees of black (brown or gray) as in Fig. 42, and always flat tinted. There are too many of them in Fig. 42 and their shapes are not decided enough. Fig. 43 is much better. Two or three shapes interesting in outline will do the trick as well as a dozen. There are five tints used in this picture. The darkest note is furnished by the tree in the right foreground. A slightly lighter shade is introduced for the second tree. The rest of the picture is composed in three flat tones. One, the lightest one, for the sunlight on the plain, hillside, and clouds. A second one for the remainder of the sky, the shadows on the hill and the foreground. The third for the shrubbery in the foreground and some dark hills in the distance.



THE VALLEY. [Fig. 43.] *W. H. Paddock.*

This picture furnishes a lesson in tone values as well as for spotting, but it is not exactly a picture of which we would say that it is perfect "in tone." By tone we mean to-day a picture that is composed in one key, that has one tint, generally a middle tint or darker one, diffused throughout the entire composition. If we look at it we want to feel at once the special monochrome tint that is predominating, combines all masses and spots without clearly separating them. The outlines, in such pictures are fused, the planes run together, contrast is sacrificed, and details are lost. Strong light and shade differentiation is impossible in such a picture, and the "Wood Interior" would be considered to be "out of tone" by all photographic tonalists. It contains a too strong contrast of black and white, and entirely too many light spots. Fig. 46, "Around Germantown," a charming composition by one of our veteran amateurs is quite subdued in tone, but it has not yet reached the (in my opinion somewhat doubtful) distinction of being a tone picture. There is still too much detail and the sky is too light for the extremists Their ideal is expressed in prints like the "Ipswich Bridge," by A. L. Coburn, and "The Pool," by E. Steichen. Fig. 48 is the better picture of the two. The objects still show some clear definition, and it has uniformity and tone. In Fig. 51 everything is blurred, and represented in two tones that do not blend as well as they might do.



WOOD INTERIOR. [Fig. 49.] *Julian Rix.*

What the extreme tonalists strive for, in most instances, is merely a fragmentary accomplishment. It is not tone in the large sense as the Old Masters or all good painters understood it. To Titian, Rembrandt, and Velasquez tone meant a combination of all pictorial qualities, the contrast of color (not subdued but used in full strength), the balance of lighter and darker planes, the line conception, the arrangement of accessories subordinated to the principal figures; all these qualities together produced tone. They did not sacrifice form and detail, correct drawing, the physiognomy, of faces and aspect to this one achievement of a uniform tonality.

What the extreme tonalist sees in tones is merely the appearance of old age. The old masters have become famous, and the public has acquired a certain predilection for dark-toned pictures. The photographers and some painters try to reproduce it, overlooking (perhaps wilfully) that the dark tonality is almost entirely an artificial product, by dirt and dampness, the chemical action of light, and the gradual change of color, oil, and varnish.

A light and shade composition is much more interesting. But it is rarely attempted nowadays. Photographers seem to be afraid of it. Stieglitz in his early days, before he became the fanatic champion of the tonal school, recognized the beauty of it. "The Old Mill" (Fig. 47), is a charming study of sunlight and shadow. Anybody fond of contrast will like such pictures. The contrast of black and white, if well arranged, gives strength and depth to a picture. And every clear day offers similar chances, provided the object depicted has sufficient planes to throw interesting shadows. Coburn also considers his "Ipswich Bridge" a light and shade composition. It is an attempt at it, a twilight version. But in a

AROUND GERMANTOWN. [Fig. 46.] *F. G. Bullock.*

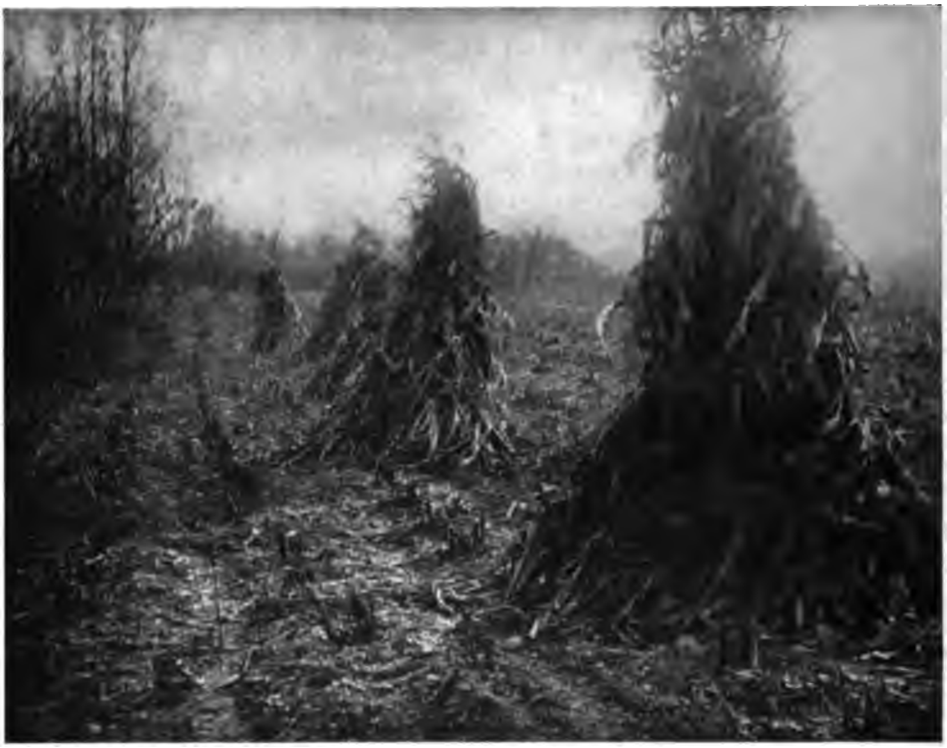
dim or dull atmosphere a virile light and shade composition, that really conveys what the words signify, becomes an impossibility.

Nearly all the great landscape painters of the past made with preference light and shade compositions. Look at the "Windmills," by George Michel. How the light plays on the foreground, how it floods the sky and distant plain in strange contrast to the dark windmills on the hills. The light effects imbue the painting with a strange vitality and variety of expression. Every detail is there and carefully arranged and executed and yet all objects depicted, lines, spots, and masses, by means of the simple diagonal composition, careful silhouetting, spacing and balancing, pull together and reproduce a oneness of tone as well as in any "tonal composition. See for yourself how monotonous some of the other illustrations look; there is no life in them. Even Figs. 42 and 45 lack animation, while Figs. 46, 48, 51 lock dull and sad. Fig. 49 is not well composed, there is no leading line, and no clever separation of light and shadow.

IPSWICH BRIDGE. [Fig. 48.] *A. L. Coburn.*

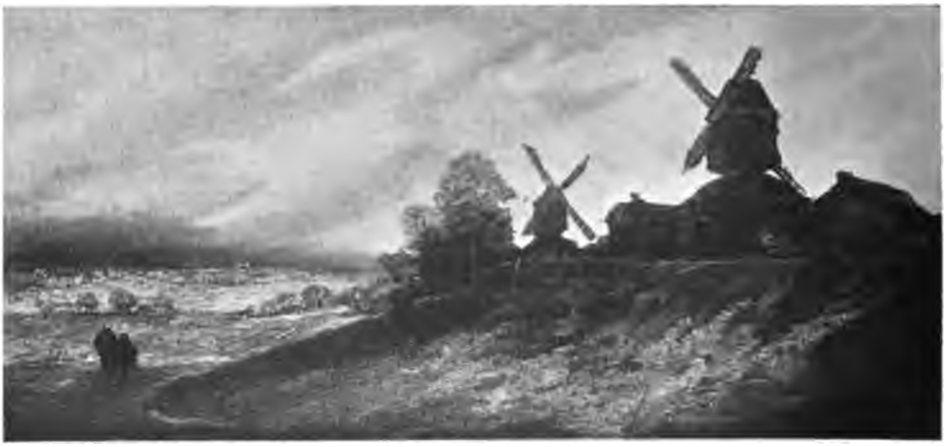
A valuable adjunct to pictorial composition can also be found in the element of repetition. This is unlike the parallelism of tree trunks, telegraph poles, columns, etc., as explained in Chapter III, which merely represents a recurrence of line. By repetition I mean the recurrence of distinct forms and shapes, in different parts of the picture, generally in diagonal line upwards or downwards towards the horizon lines. Figs. 44, 45, and 51 are all three good examples of this principle. Nearly every painter of Holland scenes has treated the windmill in a similar way. The odd shape of a windmill seems to gain in interest by repetition. It was wise, however, to show only two; they convey

THE POOL. [Fig. 51.] *E. Steichen.*

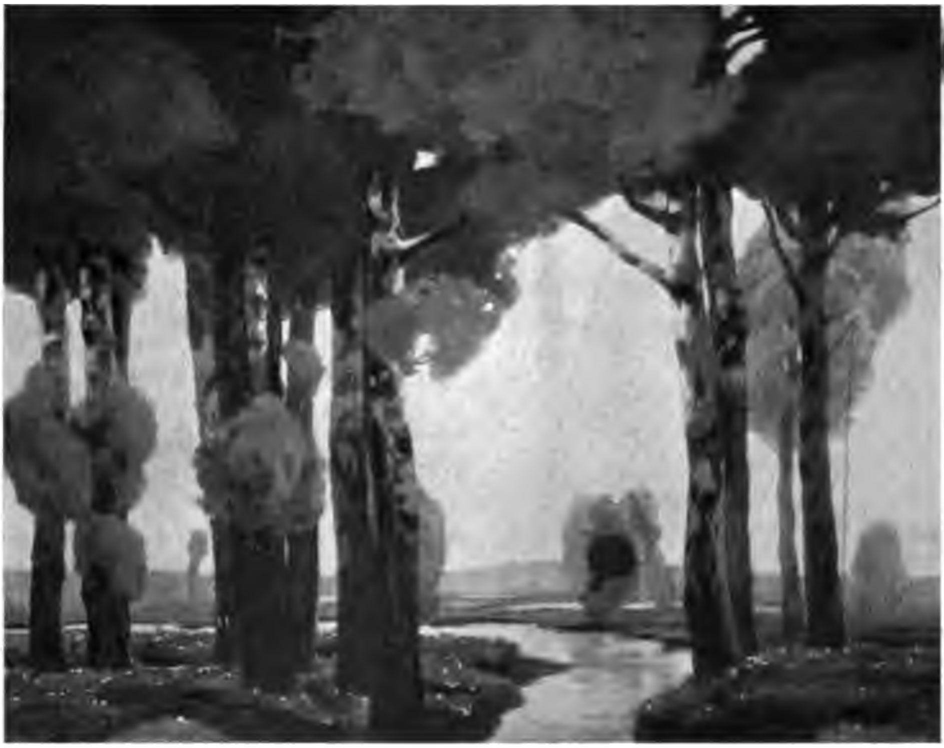


CORNSTALKS. [Fig. 41.] *Paul Fournier.*

the idea as well as three, and four would be entirely too much. Peculiar strongly characteristic shapes do not lend themselves to repetition as easily as simple forms, for instance as the triangular cornstalks in Paul Fournier's Fig. 44. This is an excellent composition. I believe nearly every amateur has tackled this subject one or another time in his career, but I have seldom seen it as



WINDMILLS. [Fig. 50.] *George Michel.*

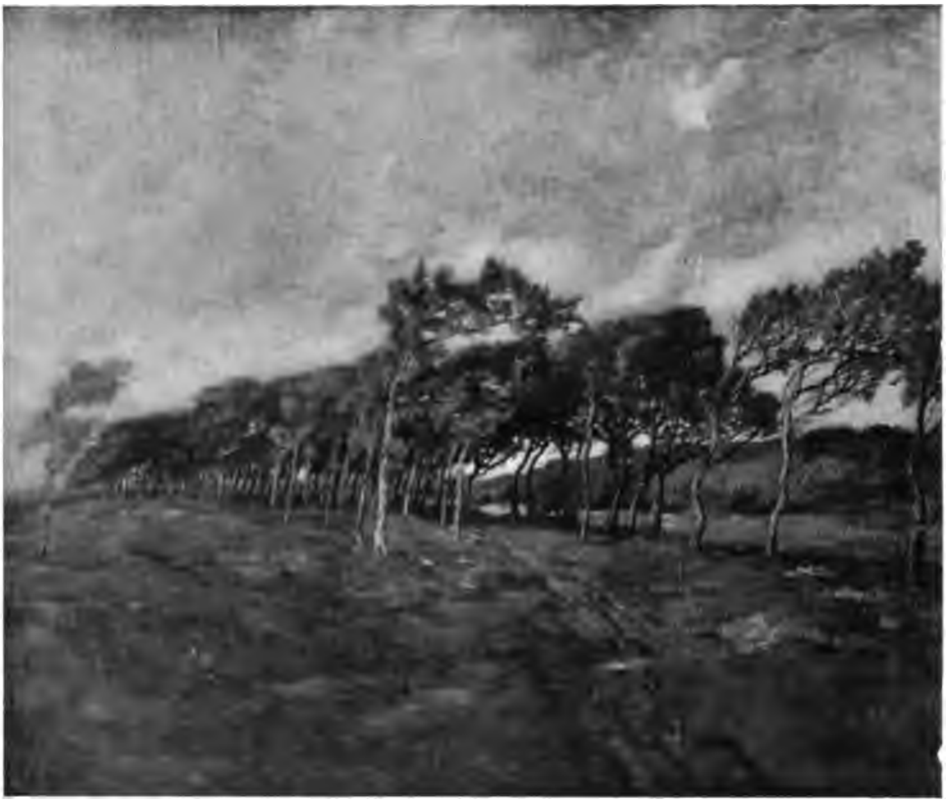


LANDSCAPE. [Fig. 52.] Ludwig Dill.

THE OLD MILL. [Fig. 47.] *Alfred Stieglitz.*

well represented as in this case. Notice how cleverly repetition is managed by the grouping of three together, evading the empty gap between, and in the different slant in the last stack. Only this makes the repetition agreeable to the eye. Exceedingly fortunate is also the introduction of the light tinted triangular cut in the sky which is really nothing but a repetition of the form of the largest stack at the right.

In the "Windswept Trees," by Paul Dougherty we have a repetition of tree forms which is quite unusual. The line work is very good. The repetition occurs within the shape of a triangular cut. But I fear this device alone would not have proved sufficient as the trees are too much alike. By the clever



WINDSWEPT TREES. [Fig. 45.] *Paul Dougherty.*

introduction of the tree in the middle and the small tree at the extreme left, both of similar shape, he has produced a horizontal suggestion which cuts into the lower diagonal line, and two accents of foliage forms which break the monotony of the upper line.

In the "Landscape," by Ludwig Dill, spotting is used as a minor attribute in the light foliage patches. This is particularly interesting as an odd combination of various forms of composition. Aside of repetition, it represents spotting, the parallelism of vertical lines, the low horizon line, the vista idea, a sweeping curve in the brook, and the clever use of silhouetting to produce interesting shapes between the tree trunks.

CHAPTER VI

The Placing of Figures in Landscapes.—Street Scenes.—Cattle Pictures. Impressionism.—Unpaintable or Strictly Photographic Subjects.—With Eleven Illustrations and One Diagram.

FIGURES are introduced in landscapes either as technical embellishments or to express some sentiment that has nothing to do with the technique of the picture.

Figures are good vehicles of accentuation. They mean more than any shape of an inanimate object as they appeal directly to our mind. The little figure in "The Brushburner" (Fig. 54), is merely a spot, but it makes the picture by giving a meaning to it. It would be rather uninteresting without it. The same is the case with Horatio Walker's "Tree Fellers at Work." (Fig. 60). Remove the two men and the picture would look absolutely bald and empty. In Fig. 55, "The Road to Paradise," by F. L. Stoddard, it is different. Although the two figures are indispensable to carry out the idea of the title, the landscape is beautiful enough to stand on its own merit. The figures are strictly accessories. And that is the proper way. If a figure is too prominent in a landscape, the latter is no longer a landscape but a figure composition with a landscape background.

The boundary line between landscape and figure composition is sometimes difficult to determine. Size is the best regulator. Corot in most instances introduced figures merely as color dots, very small in size and yet so clearly

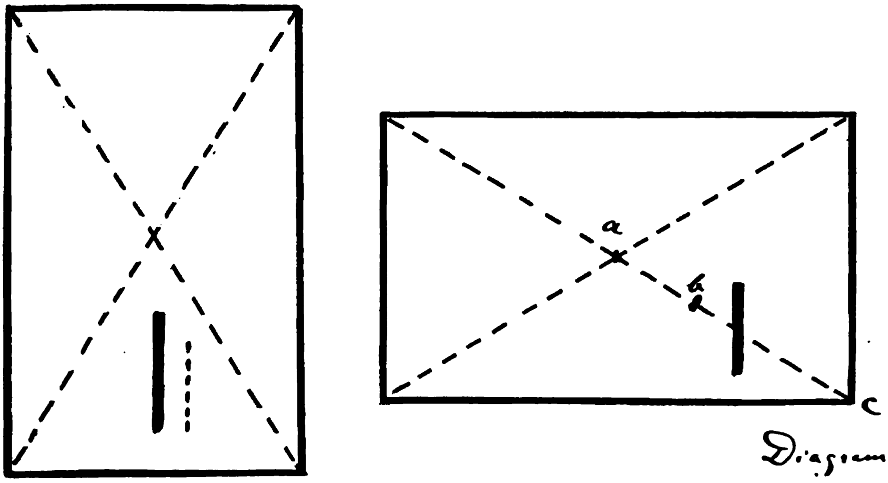
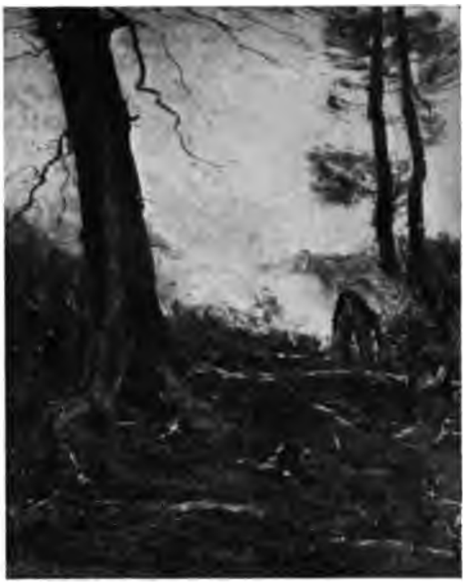


Diagram 34

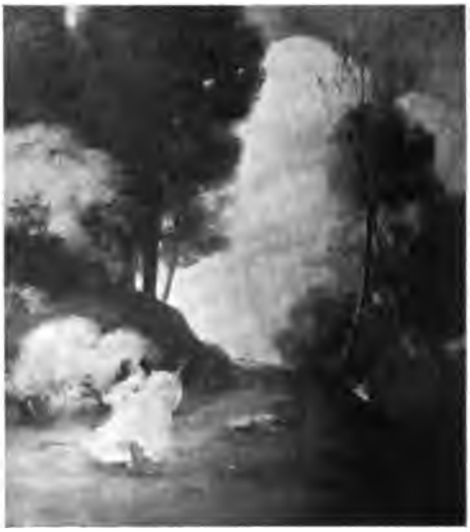


BRUSH BURNER. [Fig. 54.] *F. Kost.*

defined that they lend poetry to his paintings. Frequently they were merely as large as the figures in the distance of Fig. 62.

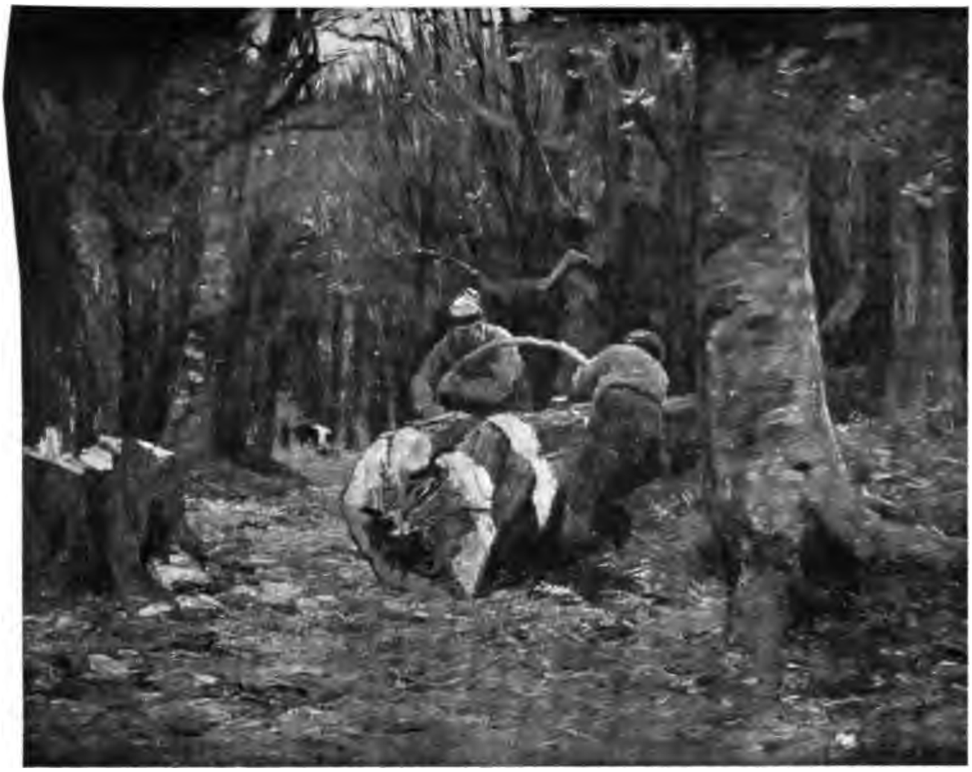
There is a certain fundamental law of relative proportions in regard to this that every craftsman should know. Draw in your oblong or upright (Diag. 34) two diagonal lines from corner to corner. This will give you the center of the picture. Divide one-half of one of the diagonal lines (a—c) into three equal parts; a—b is the result, and that is the maximum length for any figure in that particular picture, represented by the heavy vertical line. You will notice that the figures in pictures 54, 55, 56, 62 are in right relation with the size of the composition. In Fig. 60 they are a trifle too large. This picture is really a figure composition. In uprights the figures may be slightly taller without becoming over-conspicuous. The relation of a figure in an upright to that in an oblong is about 1—¾.

Too minute figures are better left out. The tiny shape in Fig. 58 is meaningless. Large figures should be made considerably larger than the maximum length for landscape so that they really become the controlling force in the composition. Nearly all the figures in our illustration express some sort of sentiment, the boy with horses in Fig. 62, the joy of going bathing on a summer day, the brush burner expresses his picturesque occupation, the two draped figures in Fig. 55, a strictly poetic sentiment, and the various pedestrians in Childe Hassam's "Church, St. Germain," typical frequenters of a quiet Paris square. Even in these pictures, excepting Fig. 55, the figures furnish an almost too conspicuous part of the composition.



ROAD TO PARADISE. [Fig. 55.] *F. L. Stoddard.*

Street scenes, of course, need figures. They are a part of them as much as windows and doors. Try to separate the figures as much as

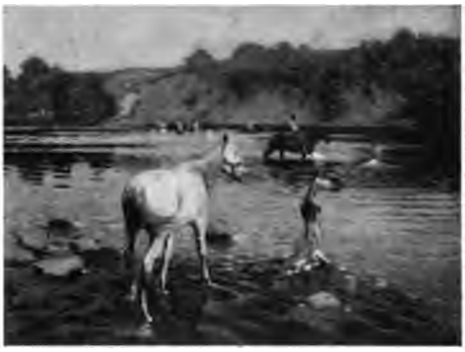


TREE FELLERS AT WORK. [Fig. 60.] *Horatio Walker.*

possible, have for instance several single figures, place between them two that stand or walk together, repeat their shape somewhere else, and have another group of three or more. Look at them as spots, apply the law or repetition and arrange them very much the same way as you would parallel tree trunks. The Lorenz picture (Fig. 62) shows clever handling in that respect. Notice one large and one small shape in the foreground, two similar ones on the middle distance, and four small shapes * * * * in the distance.

With cattle it is very much the same way as with human figures. The shapes are different and they are oftener of lighter color, but it remains the same principle.

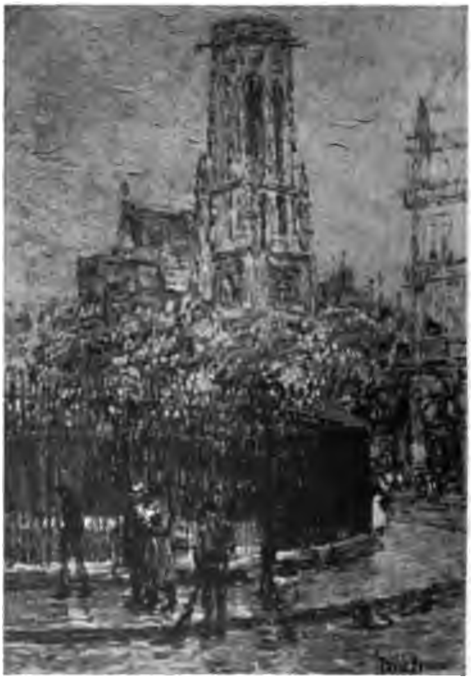
As soon as there are groups, however, like a herd of sheep for instance, the proposition becomes a different one. Then it is best to introduce them as a geometrical shape or line. Chaigneau's "Evening" is a good example of this treatment. The sheep form a sort of triangle and could easily assume the shape of a triangular cut or a perfect zigzag line, and I think it would have made a better picture if that were the case. The picture carries out the rectangular line idea, and the tree trunks are cleverly accentuated by the vertical shape of the shepherd. Cows can easily be grouped in elliptical form, horses in repetition of shapes, and sheep roaming over the hills in curves and undulating lines.



SUMMERTIME. [Fig. 62.] Richard Lorenz.

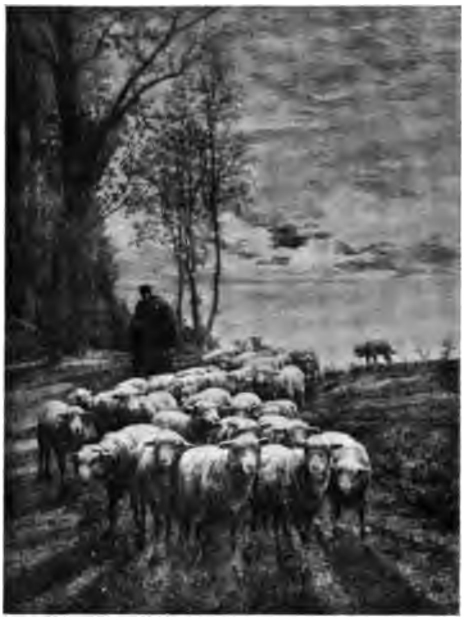
City scenes without any conspicuous figures we have in Chas. H. Needham's "Mott Haven Canal," Fig. 57, and Prescott Adamson's "Midst Stream and Smoke," Fig. 58. The photograph is better than the painting. It is a much finer and clearer composition. He applied the diagonal composition with a parallelism of slanting lines and verticals, peculiar to the subject, in a most convincing manner. The best mediums for street scenes, are either the rectangular idea, or a combination of diagonals and verticals; parallelism and repetition will be found indispensable for the treatment of ornamentation. Fig. 57 is too much of a jumble. There are no leading lines, they all interfere with each other. Perhaps it is the fault of the subject. There are many subjects that can be photographed but somehow evade the laws of pictorial composition.

Impressionism has tried to overthrow many of the older forms of composition and in a way has been successful. It has championed a certain lawlessness, a disregard for perspective and chiaroscura, and standard forms of construction, and laid special stress upon spacing, silhouetting, and the reproduction of sunlight. The impressionists claim that nature's forms in themselves are compositions, and that the best paintings are those that simply repeat in color what is seen by the human eye. Ernest Lawson's "Fort George" is such a production. It is confused enough. It is surely no masterpiece of composition and yet it follows out certain ideas of composition in a vague haphazard manner. Why the white horse in the foreground? Surely, not merely because it happened to pass by when the painter painted the picture, but rather as a balancing note for the white pole, railing, and swing stand. And why the repetition of tree forms and the vertical and horizontal lines? I believe, there is as much composition in



CHURCH, ST. GERMAIN. [Fig. 56.] Childe Hassam.

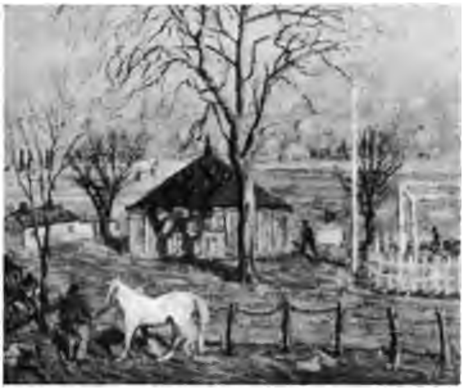
good impressionistic pictures as in any others. They carry out the Japanese idea, that every flower and every tree has its own peculiar rhythm and linear beauty, and that in painting a birch tree for instance, you should depict these qualities that are intrinsically its own. In other words, let the scene itself which you wish to depict determine your composition. This is just reverse of the other method, to find a subject suitable for the special treatment and idea of composition which you have in your mind previous to seeing the subject. Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages.


EVENING. [Fig. 61.] *Chaigneau.*

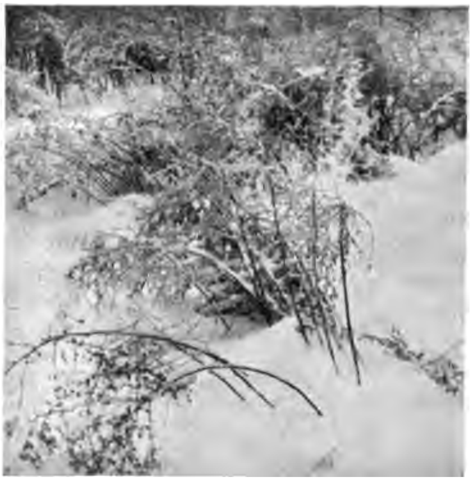
If you had all the intricacies of composition at your fingers' ends ready for immediate use, it would be safe enough to apply the impressionist method. But who has?

In some instances, however, it is the only method available. The im-

MIDST STEAM AND SMOKE. [Fig. 58.] *Prescott Adamson.*

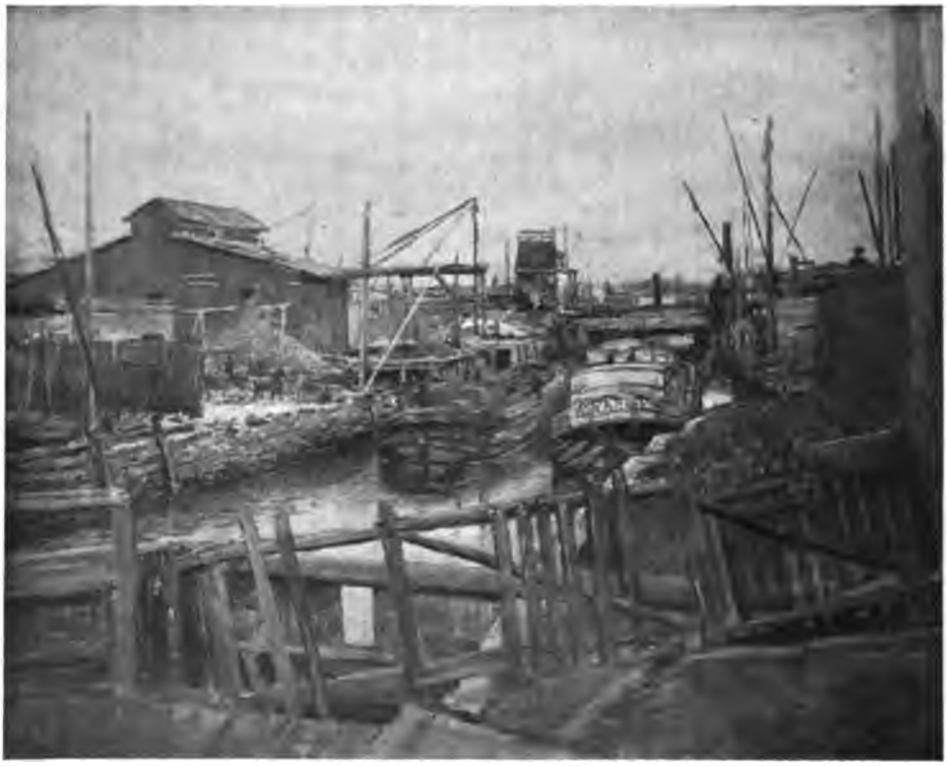


FORT GEORGE; EARLY SPRING. E. Lawson.
[Fig. 65]



WINTER. [Fig. 58.] *R. Eickemeyer, Jr.*

pressionist painters assert that every subject is paintable. I beg to differ. It is photographable perhaps, but not paintable. Foreground studies like Fig. 59, by R. Eickemeyer and atmospheric effects, like "The Storm," by J. A. Hood, are unsuited for painting. They are too fragmentary. Look for in-

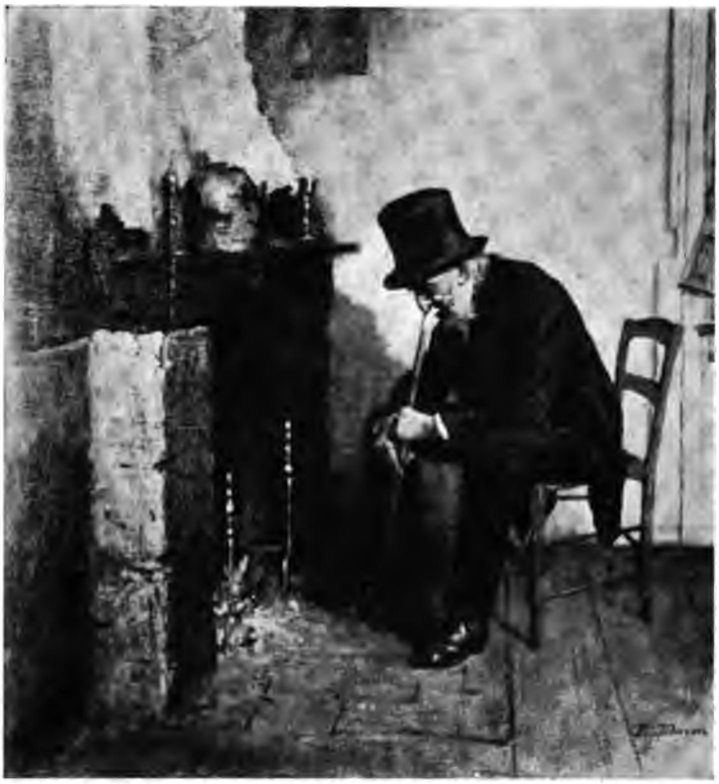


MOTT HAVEN CANAL. [Fig. 57.] *C. A. Needham.*

THE STORM. [Fig. 53.] *F. A. Hood.*

stance at the branches of some larger tree (outside the pictorial surface represented) that intrudes upon the composition. Would any painter leave them just as they are? Not even the most rampant impressionist would do it. And yet the picture has a charm of its own. Eickemeyer's foreground studies are never without composition. And yet one could not talk of composition in the ordinary sense of the word. A draughtsman would try to correct or rather emphasize the beauty of certain lines. But they really do not need it.

It may be possible that there are some new laws of beauty hidden in these strictly photographic subjects or that old ones have become almost unrecognizable under some new disguise. I wish photographers would give this argument some serious thought. To depict subjects which only the camera can depict and yet render them esthetically satisfactory would be indeed a feat worth accomplishing. I believe Stieglitz had something like this in his cranium years ago, but it has all evaporized. Surely some other photographic worker must have similar ideas. Photography should do primarily that which it can do easiest and best, what is most original and individual to its media of expression.



EMBERS. [Fig. 67.] *Eastman Johnson.*

ter might be possible to the fastidious genius and ***constructive style*** of a Herzog. For that reason I personally consider it absolutely futile to talk of Last Judgments and Annunciations, of historical scenes and pictures with dozens of figures in them. I shall restrict my argument largely to one, two, and three figure compositions, and such subjects as are feasible to the present range of pictorial photography. The preferable shapes are the same as in landscape work. Uprights and oblongs are in equal demand, and sizes approaching the perfect square are more frequently met with. The shapes of exaggerated length, however, are even less suitable for figure compositions (excepting decorative panels). The oval and circle are occasionally favored by portraitists and allegorical painters. For ordinary, sane, and normal compositions, the parallelogram forms suffice.

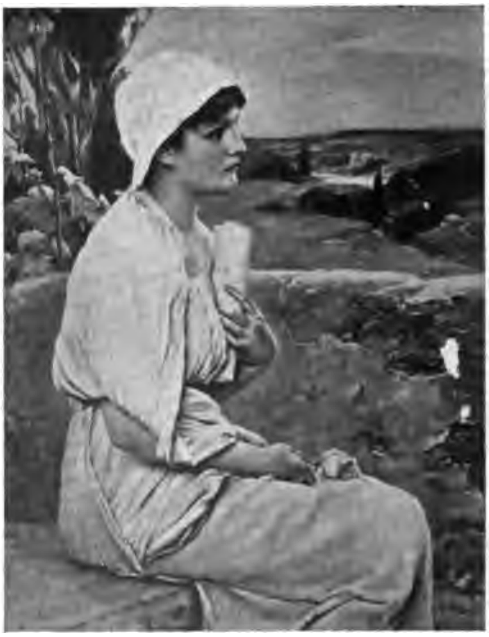
Speaking in a broad sense there are only four ways of treating the human figure. First, the realistic method, to depict human beings in the garb they ordinarily wear in a free and natural manner, as Figs. 64 and 71; second, the method of story telling to introduce some literary or humorous idea that will convey to the beholder something beyond a mere representation as Figs. 66, 67, and 72; third, to idealize and symbolize the subject to represent a

CHAPTER VII.

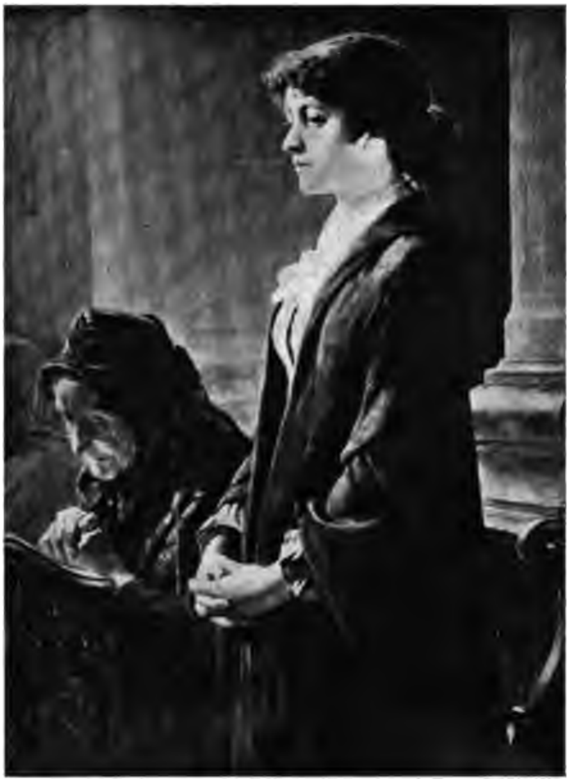
Different Principles of Representation.—The Circle, Triangle, Rhomboid, and Sharp angle.—The Shape of the Human Figure.—Its Controlling Line.—With Nine Illustrations and Six Diagrams.

FIGURE composition is more difficult to master than landscape composition. The reasons are various. A figure composition is a combination of two effects; the delineation of the figure, and the background which in most cases is a representation of some interior or out-of-door scene. Furthermore, figures do not compose as easily as a bit of scenery. They have to be posed (to say nothing of finding first the adequate models), brought into special relation to each other and the background, and imbued with some idea that is more definite, ambitious, and varied than those that can be conveyed by landscapes.

Figure delineation is one of the great art expressions, while landscape representation is merely a branch of the pictorial arts. As I have only six chapters left to treat the subject, I would nigh despair at the very start, if there were no way of simplification. Photographic figure delineation is still exceedingly limited. Every honest camera worker has to admit this. For that reason it is of no use to talk of elaborate compositions and masterpieces of paintings that are impossible to photography. The ambitious amateur might aspire to making pictures like F. H. Tompkins' "In the Church," Eastman Johnson's "Embers," A. Seifert's "Hypatia," or even Albert Thomas' "Hymn to Selene," but he would never dream of attempting "An Assassination of Julius Cæsar," Rembrandt's "Night Watch," or Botticelli's "Spring," though the lat-



HYPATIA. [Fig. 70.] *A. Seifert.*



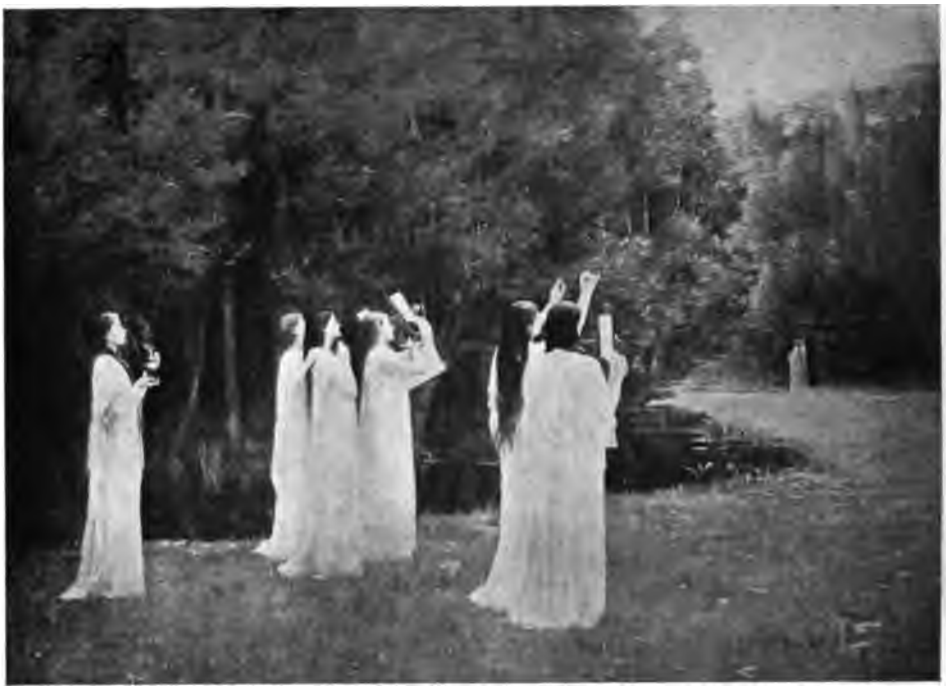
IN THE CHURCH. [Fig. 64.] *F. H. Tompkins.*

strictly poetic or highly intellectual idea as Fig. 65; and finally, fourth, the decorative style which puts more stress on technical devices than actual representation.

The first three have technically the same aim, to create an illusion that we are looking into space at real objects as we do through a window. The fourth principle rather wishes to suggest than to represent, it does not particularly desire to create an illusion but solely a beautiful impression. For that reason it expresses itself best in flat tones like Diag. 39. Realistic representation works in gradations from black to white, from dark masses in one part of the picture towards lighter ones in another, (as Fig. 40, a so-called "center composition"), as flat tones always give the impression of mere surface elaboration. Fig. 65 is really a decorative subject but the painter chose to paint it in a realistic manner.

The methods of figure composition are dependent much on the same laws as in landscape work. We meet the same geometrical forms and line ideas, only that some are more and others are less important in figure work. Besides many new features are added.

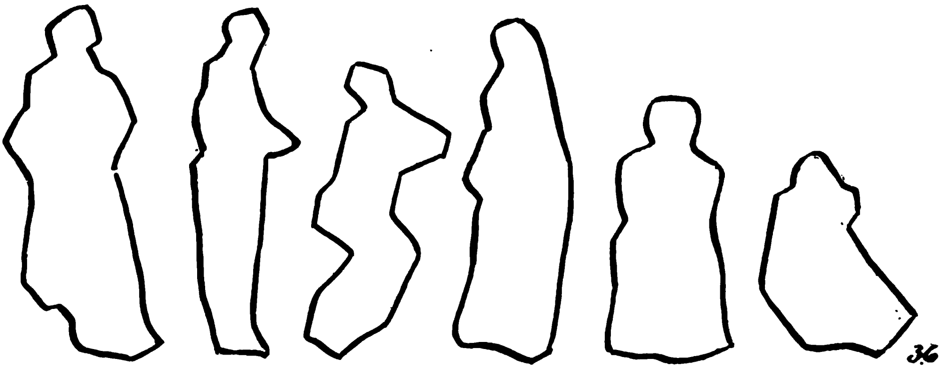
The horizontal idea is entirely overshadowed by the vertical. The human figure is in most instances vertical or diagonal in tendency and for that



HYMN TO SELENE. [Fig. 65.] *Albert Thomas.*

reason alone arrangements emphasizing this tendency predominate. The diagonal form we have in the handsome girl of Normandy entitled "Expectation," by A. Guillon (Fig. 71) and in Jeanne E. Bennett's "Two Little Dutch Girls" (Fig. 66). The rectangular idea is carried out in Fig. 70, and the parallelism of vertical lines in Fig. 65.

The ellipse is scarce but occasionally met with in the presentation of a roundelay, or children playing on the floor. The circle on the other hand, which is not specially suitable for landscape, plays an important part in figure arrangement. In Antoine Wiertz's famous painting, "The Secret," we have an exceedingly clever version of the circular principle. It generally assumes more the shape of an oval as indicated in Diag. 35.



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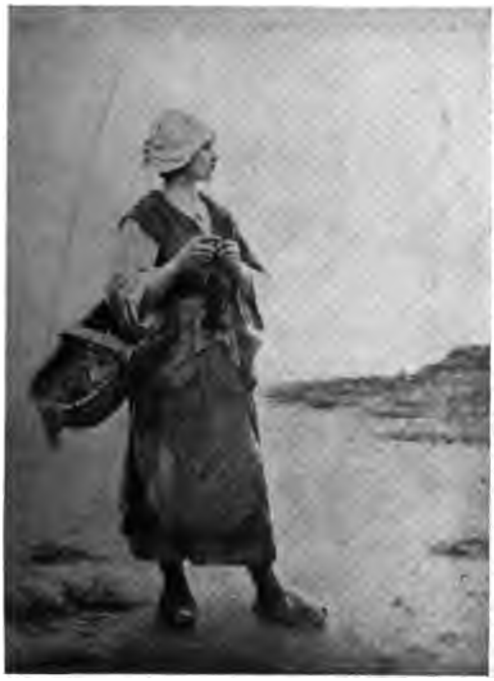
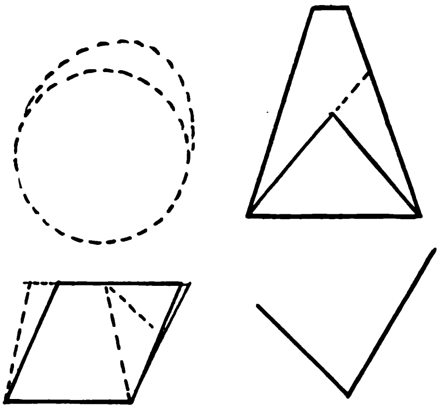


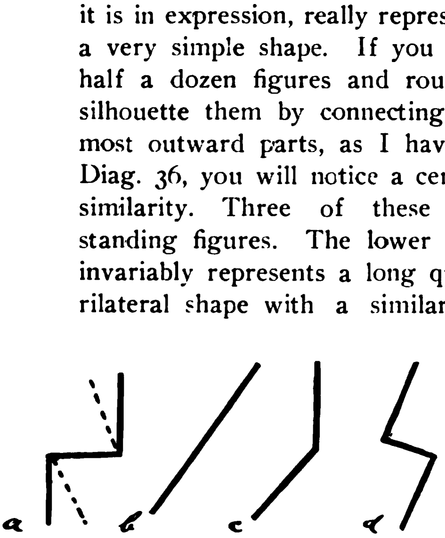
EXPECTATION. [Fig. 71.] *A. Guilloin.*



35

The same diagram introduces us to several new principles. The equilateral triangle, the obtuse angled triangle, and the elongated isosceles with a flattened apex appear often in single figures as well as groups. "At the Café," by Zervy (Fig. 69) is a composition that shows the use of the equilateral triangle to good advantage. Another popular form is the rhomboid and its various versions of quadrilateral shapes. The sharp angle frequently controls a two figure arrangement as in Fig. 64. We will have ample opportunities to return to these various principles and analyze them more carefully in the following chapters.

The human form, as varied as it is in expression, really represents a very simple shape. If you take half a dozen figures and roughly silhouette them by connecting the most outward parts, as I have in Diag. 36, you will notice a certain similarity. Three of these are standing figures. The lower part invariably represents a long quadrilateral shape with a similar or



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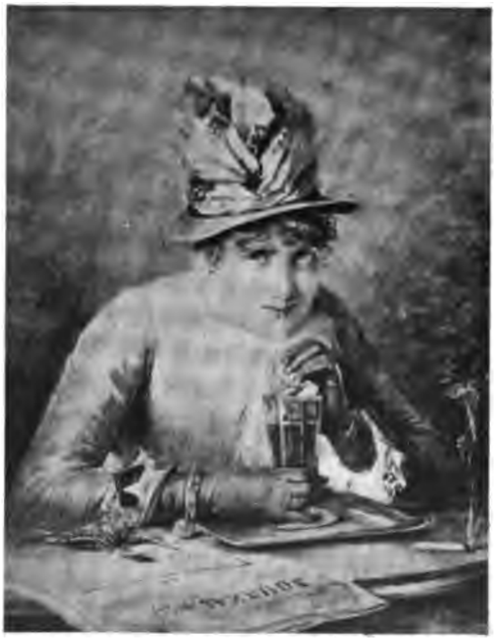


AT THE CAFE. [Fig. 69] *Zervy.*

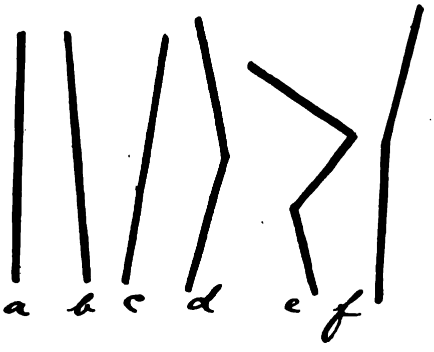


Diagram 38.

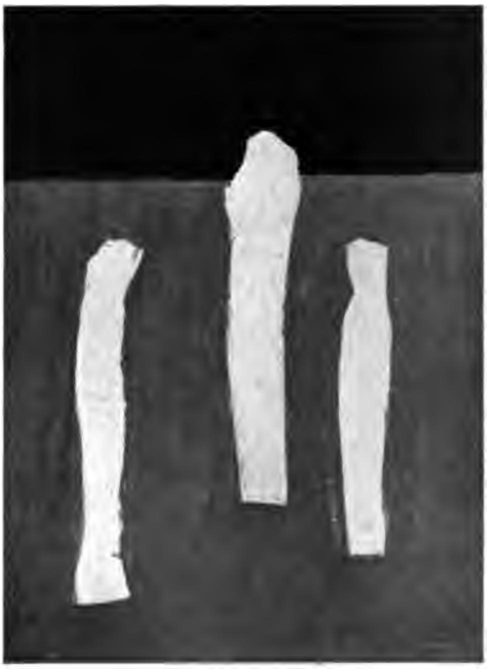


Diagram 39.

quadrilateral shape above. Seated figures either resemble a triangle, a quadrilateral, or assume the D shape of Diag. 37. The leading lines that control seated figures I have tried to convey in this diagram. They can be reduced to form. In Fig. 70 we have the A form, also in Solomon's male figure (Fig. 72). In the same picture, in the young girl seated on another's lap, occurs the D line. D conveys the idea of a reclining figure with outstretched legs or a figure seated straight with outstretched legs.

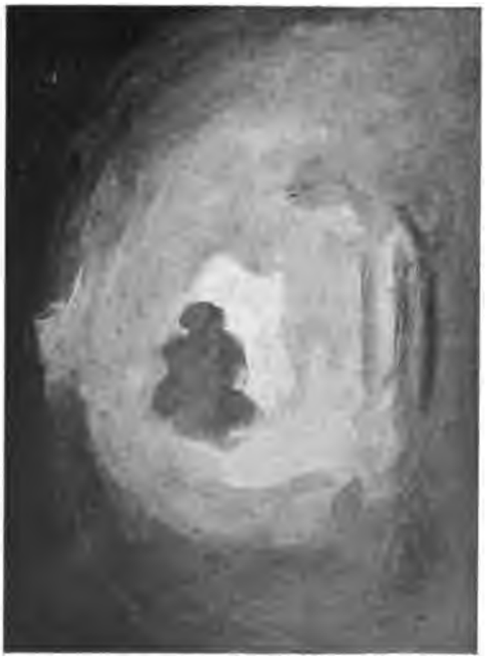
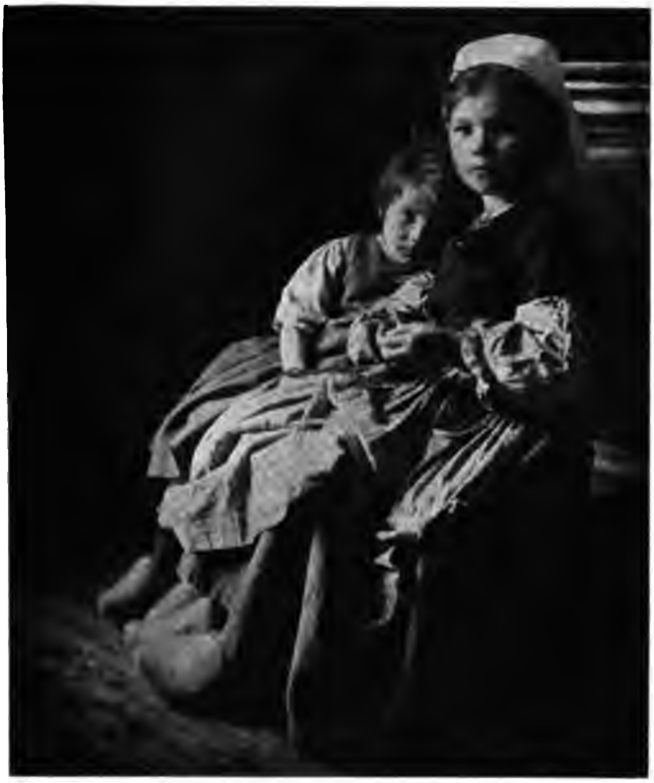


Diagram 40.

The principal controlling lines of standing figures we find in Diag. 38. A shows us the ordinary attitude of standing erect as the draped females in Fig. 65; B the standing position of Fig. 71; C the diagonal tendency of the seated group in Fig. 72; D the attitude of leaning forwards like the woman to the left in the same picture; E of a figure stooping, and F of a figure leaning backwards.

You may wonder why I dwell upon this with such minute care. Simply to impress upon your mind the line importance of the human figure. This line is the starting point of all composition for it determines everything else in the



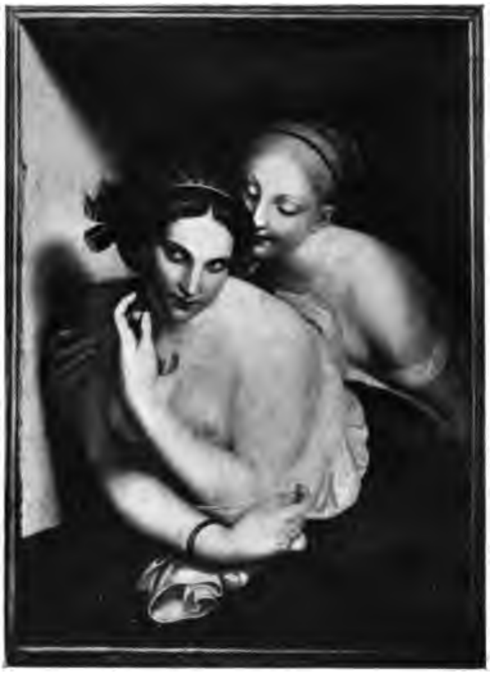
TWO LITTLE DUTCH GIRLS. [Fig. 66.] *Jeanne E. Bennett.*

picture. The figure nearly always contains the point of interest, and all other lines and shapes are dependent on the line and shape of the main attraction. Of course there are many other lines in every figure, but they are all subordinated to the center line. Notice how angular and straight all the lines are in various figures of Moore's picture. They complement the vertical tendency. In Fig. 71 you will notice several decidedly diagonal lines aside of the diagonal center line, and in Fig. 68 all the lines seem to have a circular tendency.

The limbs of a graceful or absolutely natural person may at times unconsciously complement the movements and attitudes of the body. But how many models do you find that move with grace and ease. It is up to you to add what they are lacking in.

As soon as you have placed a figure in any desired position you can experiment with the seven line ideas of Chapter III, and determine which combination is most suitable. Of course, I do not mean that the student should look at diagrams while he is operating. He should know these things so well that they have become second nature to him. For instance if he indulges in a circular composition à la Wiertz (Fig. 68) he should know at once that a circular form is best supplemented by diagonal lines. Notice how cleverly the painter has managed it. He took one of the simplest geometrical forms, the diagonal division, applied it to the background, and thereby put a masterly finishing touch to the entire composition.

The Moore painting, "A Youth Relating Tales," is by no means a masterpiece of composition. It is only interesting how the artist tried to improve his figure by horizontal and vertical lines. In the rectangular composition of Fig. 70 we have two other straight horizontal lines in the wall and sky line. They are slightly curved but nevertheless make the picture look rather severe.

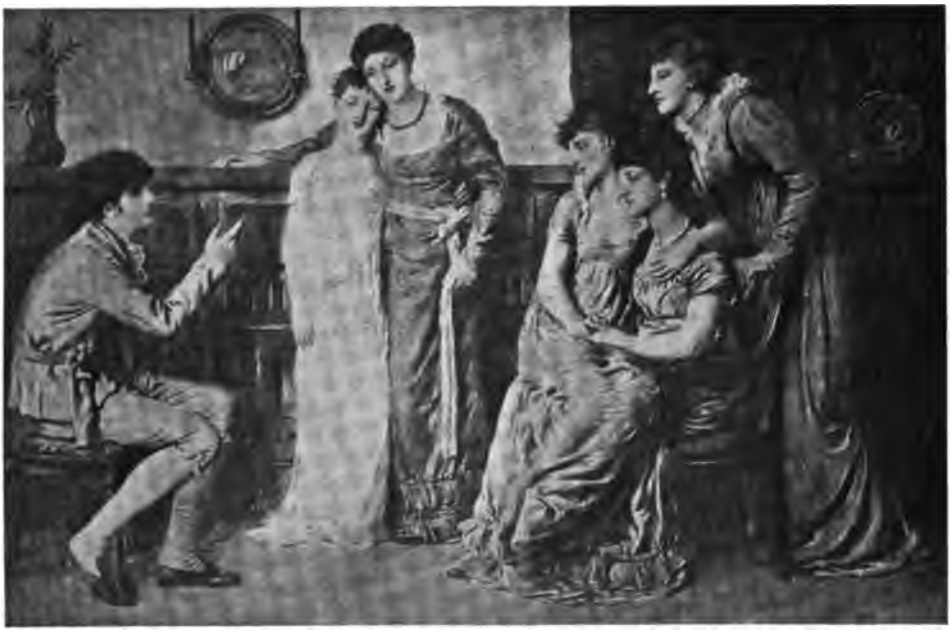


[Fig. 68.] *A. Wiertz.*

Perhaps this was the intention of the artist; in that case there would be no use of criticism. But I believe he could have accomplished the same effect in a different manner.

In Fig. 67 we have a version of the A line of Diag. 37 in the figure of the old man. It is rather angular and well balanced by the vertical lines of the open fireplace, but the line which makes the composition a good one is the diagonal line of the mantelpiece. Without it the figure would be isolated, not *in* the picture.

The best way to develop line feeling is to draw a straight or curved line in a haphazard way within an oblong or upright, then add one or two lines and study whether they look well with the first one. One needs to be no draughtsman for that. It will benefit you wonderfully. You will realize that some lines look better than the other, one combination will please you, another one will look awkward. Rub out the added lines and experiment again, and continue to do so at leisure moments. You will soon arrive at the same conclusions that I endeavor to convey to you, and learn to see objects in controlling lines and simple outline shapes.



A YOUTH RELATING TALES. [Fig. 72] *S. T. Solomon.*

CHAPTER VIII.

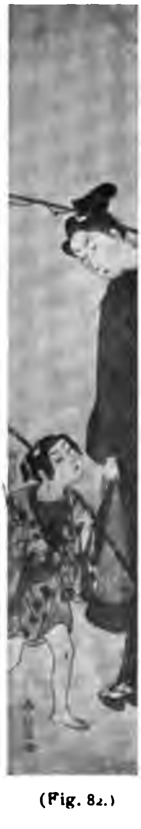
Background Arrangements.—Leading Forms of Light and Shade Division.—Foreground and Middle Distance.—Center Composition.—Balance of Lines and Masses.—With Eleven Illustrations and Six Diagrams.

THE most important feature of figure composition (next to the figure arrangement itself) is the background. You can not make a good figure composition without an adequate background. The plain background which consists merely of a differentiation of values without subject matter is only permissible in portraits, and the representation of types, pretty women treated in a sketchy manner, or figures of some local ethnological interest, as, for instance, a Spanish brigand or bullfighter, a Cape Cod fisherman, a Parisian beggar, etc. And even then the figure must be large and fill almost the entire space.

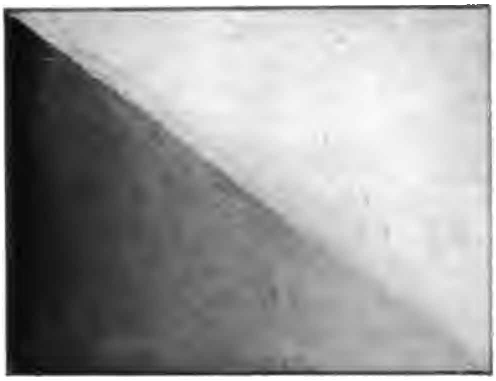
The Japanese artists of the older school hardly ever used a background (*vide* Fig. 82), but they were designers who had a different aim than our artists. They do not want to create the illusion of space but merely fill a space in a surface manner. They also were fond of the mannerism of letting the edges of the picture cut into their figures and to show only parts of them. This is not without decorative charm but less suitable for our Western style of composition. The impressionist and poster artist have utilized the idea with more or less success, but it always subordinates the figure to the background, and gives the composition a decorative tendency. To give the impression of space atmosphere around a figure it must be placed somewhere towards the center of the picture.

Broadly speaking, there are only two kinds of background, the interior and open-air background. In this paper we shall discuss the first proposition. In an interior there is necessarily a preponderance of vertical lines, and as the source of light is more limited than in out-of-doors scenes light and shape prove the best vehicle to divide the space.

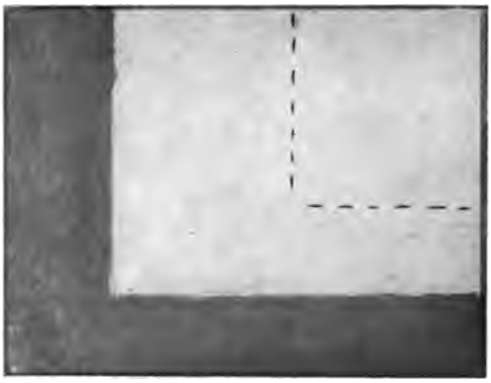
The frequently quoted maxim of Ruskin, "Learn to think in shadows," is particularly valuable in interior composition. The source of light generally comes either from a window (Figs. 77, 80, 84), an open door (Figs. 75, 83), or from some artificial cause, as a lamp (Fig. 76), flashlight (Fig. 74) which distorts values and never furnishes a truthful representation, or from some



(Fig. 82.)



(Diag. 41.)

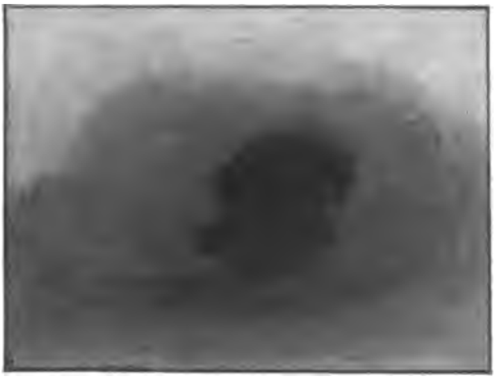


(Diag. 42.)

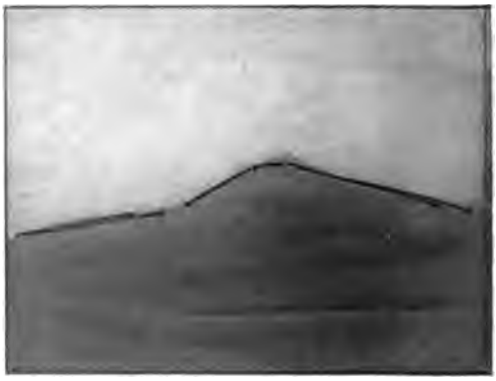
special light appliance as the footlights, for instance (Fig. 81). The first three sources are the simplest and most natural. The normal is always to be preferred, even if one aspires to abnormal effects.

Light and shade distribution with the help of lines offers an endless variety of effects. The fundamental forms will always be found reliable. We have become acquainted with the version of Diag. 41 in the previous chapter. The rectangular idea (Diag. 42) is particularly available. We have examples of it in Figs. 77 and 80. "Waiting and Watching," by Josef Israels is a beautiful arrangement. The surface of the window and the light striking the face and table, leaving the remainder in subtle half-shadows, form a simple rectangular shape, and vertical lines predominate in the foreground and background.

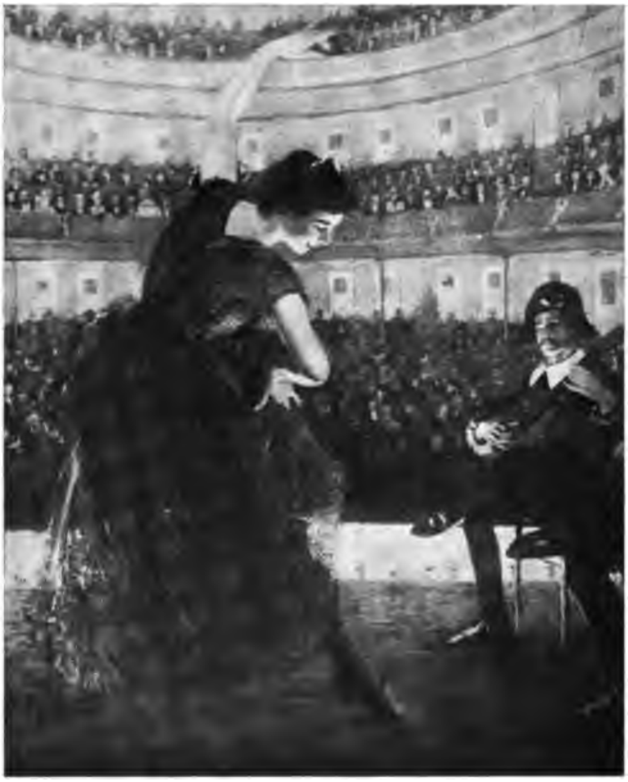
The term "background" in the parlance of artists includes foreground, middle distance, and distance. In interiors there is generally no distance, unless one should choose to consider the vista of the back room in Fig. 78, or the lines of the auditorium in Fig. 81 as such. Also the foreground falls away as soon as the figure is placed very near the lower edge. "Sad News," by R. W. Vonnoh, has no foreground to speak of. The composition is good but not quite as convincing as that of Israels. The figure has the S shape and the



(Diag. 43.)



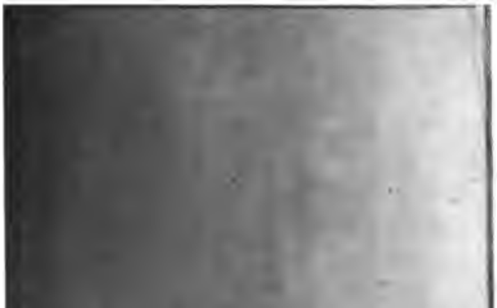
(Diag. 44.)



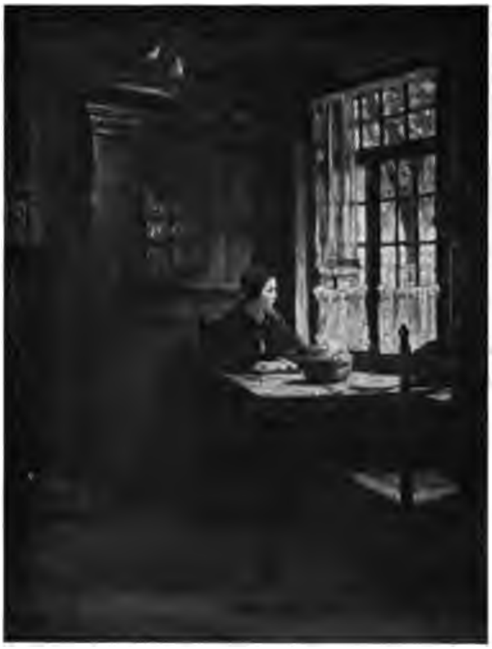
BEHIND THE FOOTLIGHTS. (**Fig. 81.**) ***Louis Kronberg.***

rest of the picture is carried out largely in the rectangular idea. The face could be more beautiful if it had been placed so that the silhouette of the face would show against the wood-work. The light spots outlining the face are not

(Dig. 45.)



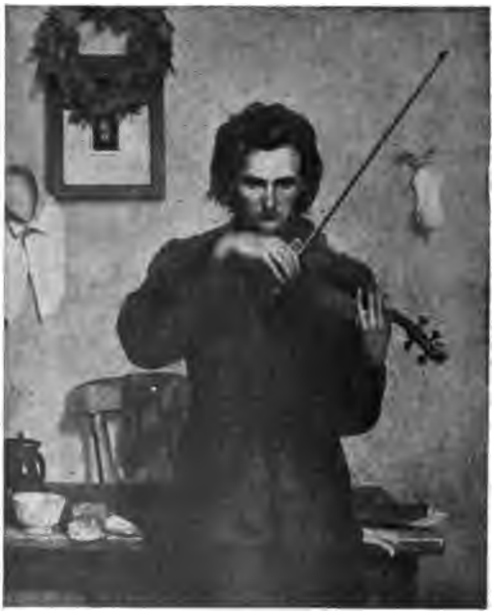
(Diag. 46.)



WATCHING AND WAITING. *Josef Israëls.*
(Fig. 77.)

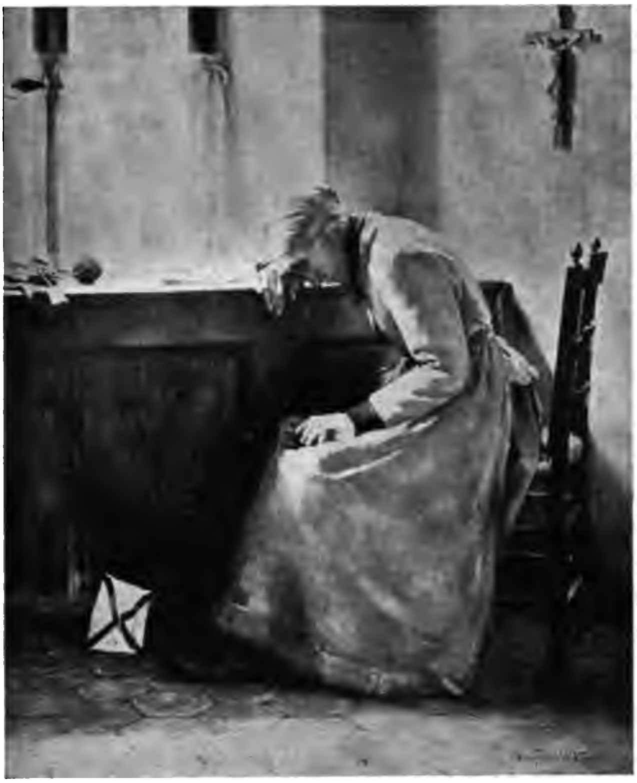
beautiful. Otherwise the line work is well balanced. If the rectangular idea had been carried out more fully by making the wall with the crucifix dark, the figure could not sit in the same position, but had also to assume a more rectangular shape.

Diag. 43 is the reverse of Diag. 40 in the last chapter. It is not often met with. A modified example of it we find in A. Struys' "Perhaps," where the darkest part is in the center, and light around the edges. It is a specimen of the flat background that is nearly related to the plain background of portraits. In this case it is rendered interesting by spotting rather than gradation. Notice how carefully everything has been placed, and its greatest charm perhaps is that every object conveys a meaning aside from its value as a feature of the composition. On the table is placed a frugal repast and a few sheets of music which indicate in plain language the life of this young musician, full of hardships and study. He is too poor even to buy a full dress shirt. But he has faith in his genius, the holy water basin imparts this idea. And then the laurel wreath in the frame of some celebrated musician. Will he also reach the pinnacle of fame? Perhaps. The diagonal line of the violin bow is absolutely necessary to the composition. Without it the picture would lack balance.



PERHAPS. (Fig. 79.) *A. Struys.*

Diag. 40 is the form of center composition which enjoys great popularity in lamp-light arrangements. Elizabeth Nourse composed her "Evening" (Fig. 76) in this fashion. The source of light is exactly in the center, only its circular shape has cleverly been modified by the blunt angle form

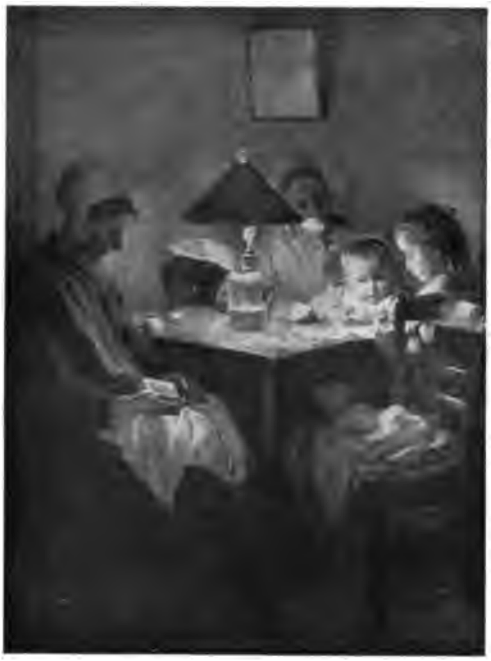


SAD NEWS. (Fig. 80.) *R. W. Vonnoh.*

of the table and the application of the two rectangular shapes of the chair and the old woman. In a way it also carries out the form of Diag. 44, as does G. Lorey's "Golden Anniversary." This picture has no pictorial pretensions, it is meant as a portrait and a record of wedding gifts. It merely reveals the photographic possibilities of representing detail. Elimination alone could give this picture pictorial value.

The forms that are available to the proper division of planes and masses in the background are endless, and often the line and chiaroscural ideas do not supplement but rather oppose each other. It is my contention that the composition always fares better if they work in perfect harmony, but I suppose this is not always possible. In A. Marshall's photograph entitled "Sunday Morning," we have the line idea of Diag. 44, but the light and dark planes are not controlled by them. They are scattered throughout the composition. If the walls were darker and the shadows in the lower part a trifle more translucent, the idea of Diag. 44 would have been carried out more perfectly, and the composition would show better balance.

"The Kitchen of Mount Vernon" (Fig. 75), by Eastman Johnson, one of our great American genre painters, is also unsatisfactory in this respect. There are too many light streaks and dark spots. This may be the fault of the

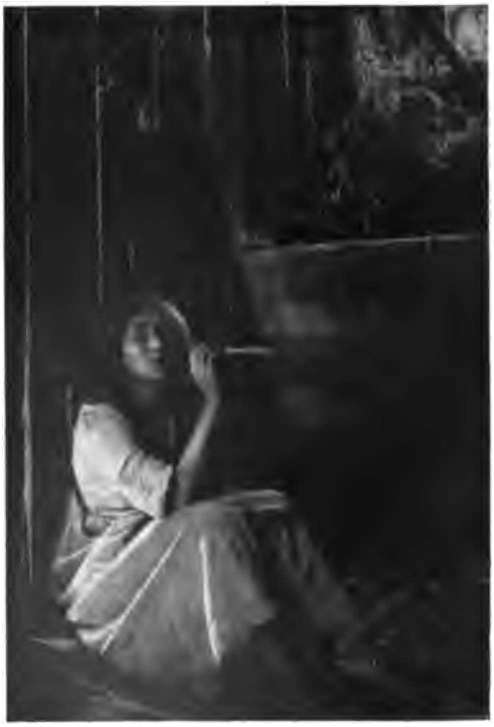


EVENING. (Fig. 76.) *Elizabeth Nourse.*

reproduction. In color it may produce a fine harmony. Nevertheless it is safe to say that the picture is deficient as a light and shade composition. There is no leading idea of line or light distribution, and it could easily have been managed, either by center arrangement or diagonal division.

Diag. 45 merely represents one of the many other possibilities, the concentration of light in a triangular form. The figure "M'liss," (Fig. 83), by Anne W. Brigman carries out this principle. The triangle is well supported by the rectangular idea. It is a simple and satisfactory composition.

The gradation from dark to light across the width of the picture as shown in Diag. 46 is always effective, but hardly sufficient to serve as the leading theme of a composition. It furnishes, however, a valuable assistance to tone compositions like Clarence H. White's illustration to "Eben Holden" (Fig. 78). In tone composition everything is subordinated to the prevailing middle tint. All line and shape ideas are smothered as it were in the general tint. The composition of this picture is exceedingly clever; it combines the isosceles shape of the figure with the rectangular form and vista idea; but it does not produce any vivid impression. Tone and animation do not go together. If you prefer subtlety to strength, uniformity of tint to contrast, tone will be your favorite vehicle of expression. But never forget that you sacrifice thereby many other fascinating elements of composition. A tone picture always looks dull and flat in comparison to light and shade compositions.



"*M'LISS.*" (Fig. 83.) ***Anne W. Brigman.***

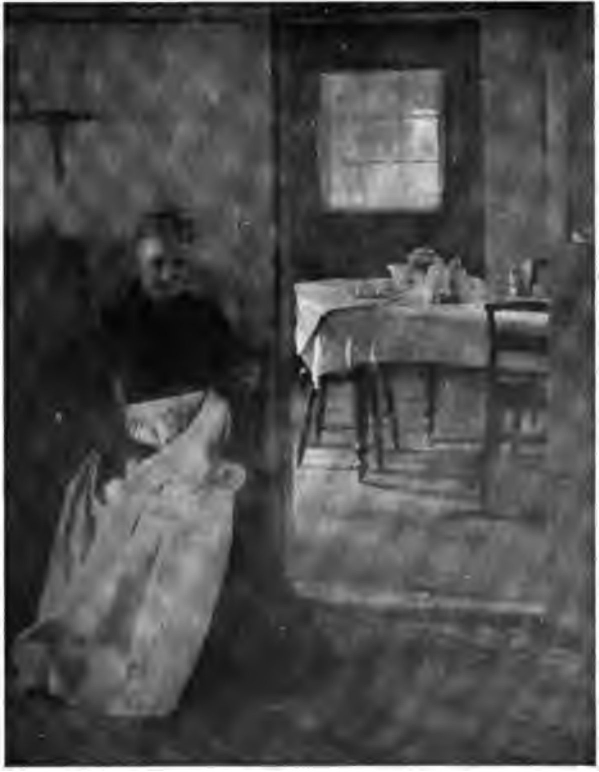
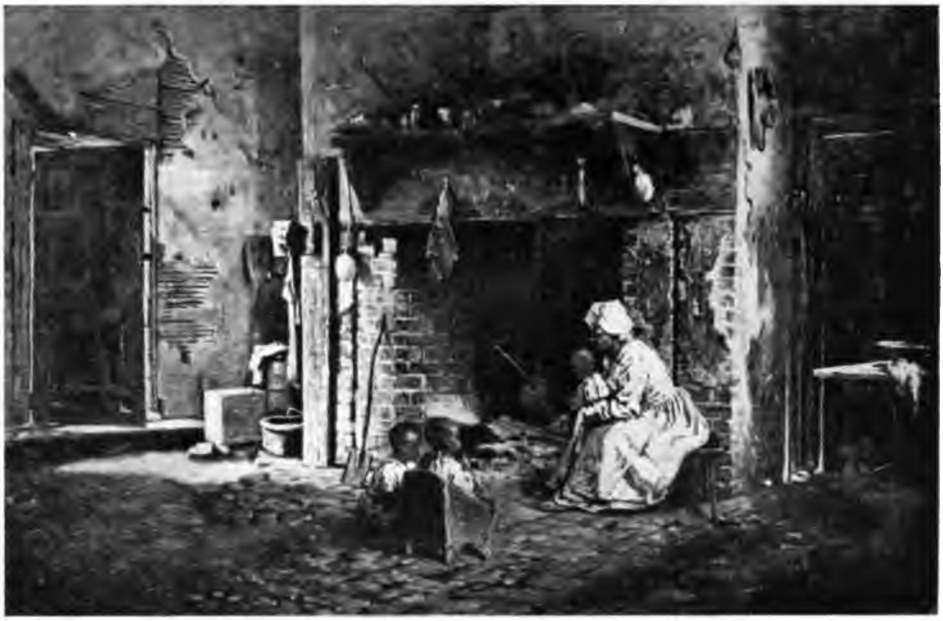
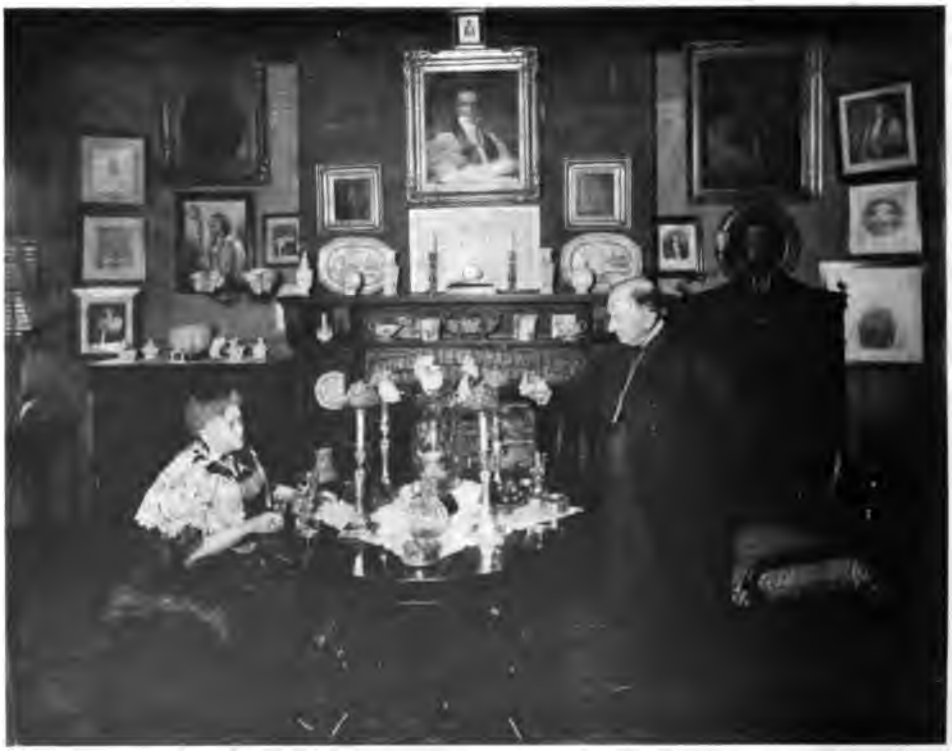


ILLUSTRATION FOR "EBEN HOLDEN." *C. H. White.*

(Fig. 78.)



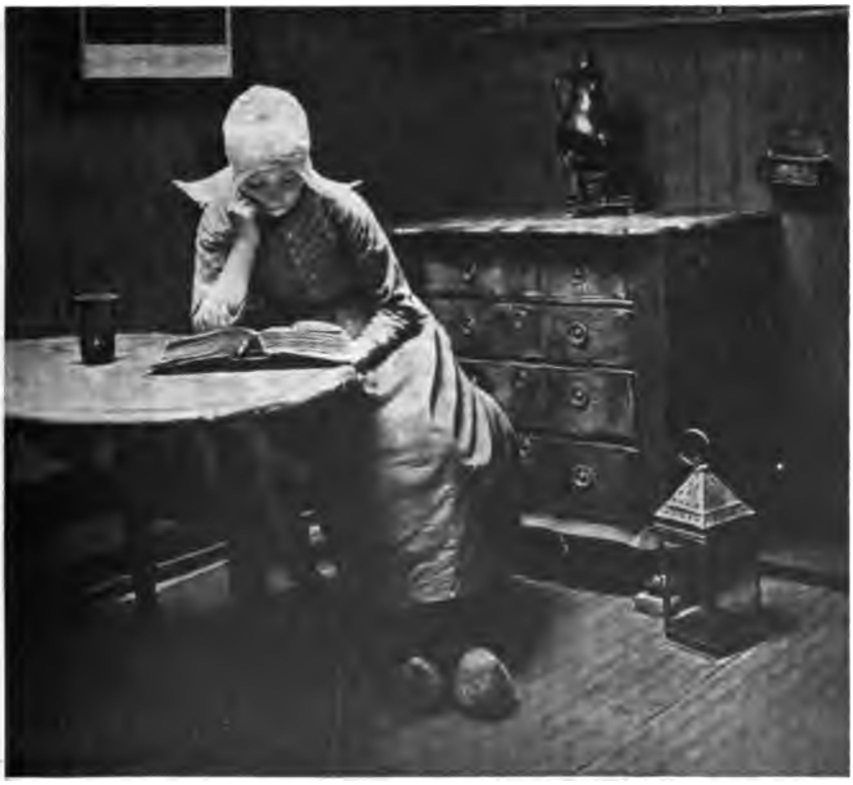
THE KITCHEN OF MOUNT VERNON. (Fig. 75.) ***Eastman Johnson.***



GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY (Fig. 74.) ***G. Lorey.***

"Behind the Footlights" (Fig. 81), by Louis Kronberg represents an exceptional case. A figure in quick motion easily assumes a shape equivalent to the zigzag shape in landscape arrangements. The figure, however, is not well balanced, neither by the background nor the mandolin player. If these were two instead of one, forming a diagonal shape, the composition would greatly improve. The background is interesting for its parallelism of dark and light curve form; but the figure is isolated, it does not sink into the background and this is largely due to the fact that the surface curves do not harmonize with the angular shape of the figure.

Figures should always look as if they were one with the background, and not like silhouettes pasted on the background, Figs. 74, 81, 84, and even 80, do not quite produce the impression that they stand in the depth of some space and absolutely belong to the interior that surrounds them. It is best carried out in Figs. 76, 77, 78, and 83.



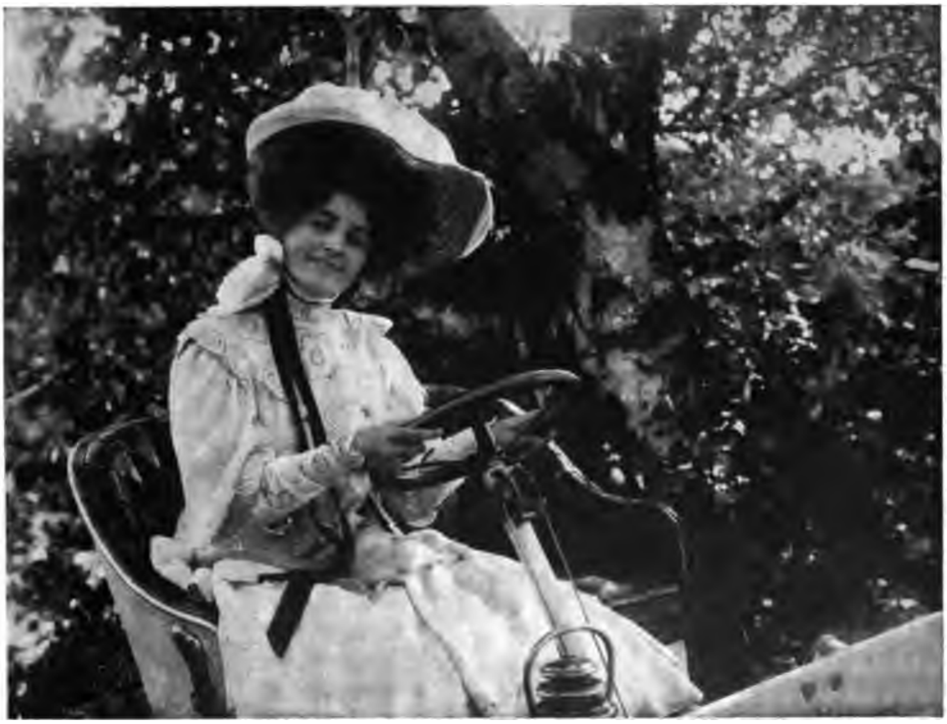
SUNDAY MORNING. (Fig 84.) *A. Marshall*

CHAPTER IX

Landscape Backgrounds.—Breadth and Detail.—Different Combinations of Foreground, Middle Distance, and Distance.—A Hint from the Old Masters.—Exceptional Cases.—With Sixteen Illustrations.

UNLIKE the interior background which, as we have shown in the last chapter, is limited to foreground and in most instances only to middle distance effects, the well composed landscape foreground generally shows foreground as well as middle distance and distance.

Of course, this does not always hold good. In "The Auto Girl," by H. J. Leonard (Fig. 92), we merely see a foliage background and in the decorative panel, "Flashing Sunlight" (Fig. 85), by Eva Watson Schultze, the foreground is absent, which is also the case in the charming picture "Mother and Child," by Geo. de Forrest Brush (Fig. 87). But more out-of-door figure compositions show a distinct foreground, middle distance, and

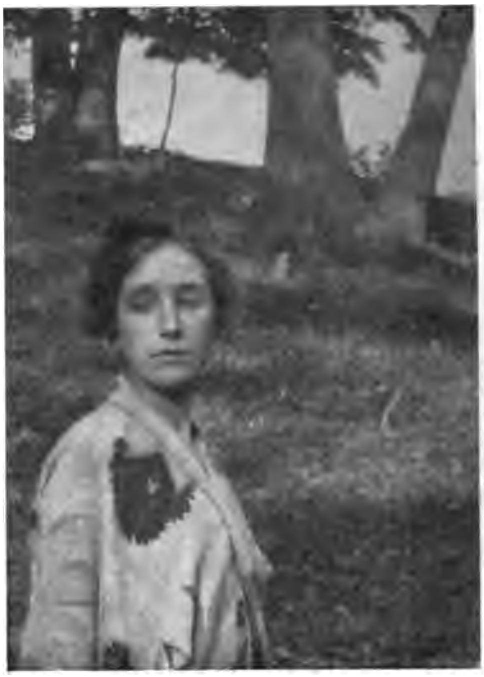


THE AUTO GIRL. (Fig. 92) *H. J. Leonard.*

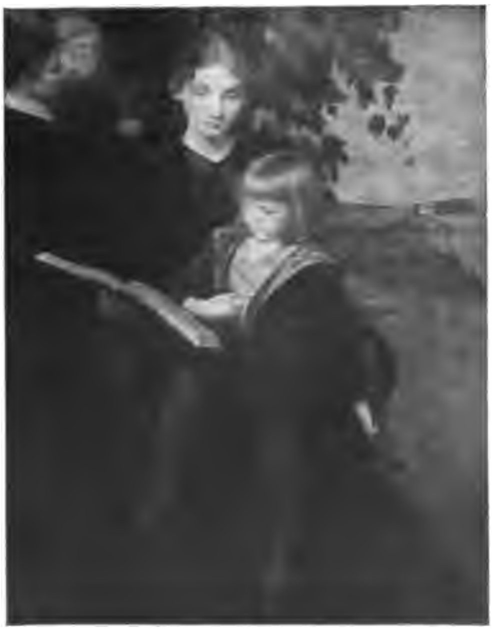
distance. For this the "Young Horseman," by Richard Lorenz, is typical. There we notice a steady gradation from distinctness to indistinctness. The same can be observed in Figs. 88, 93, and 97. In interiors the middle distance, the background, is generally represented by clearly defined objects, they may be somewhat blurred but they represent distinct forms and shapes.

In the landscape background there is a tendency to slur the middle distance. Middle distance and distance are in many cases but slightly differentiated (viz. Alfred Stieglitz's "Net Mender," Fig. 89). The gradation is hardly perceptible and almost the same value of tints prevails throughout. This introduces a new element of breadth and detail, detail in the foreground and breadth in the background. The reverse, which is sometimes applied by painters, I believe is impossible in figure photography. The distance in Coburn's "The Dragon," Fig. 5, is as clear and distinct as in Seifert's "Hypatia" (Fig. 70), but there is no figure in the foreground, and if there were one it would be merely a blurred shape. Detail in the foreground and breadth in the distance is a good medium to express a vast area of space. In Fig. 87 as well as 95 the horizon line looks as if it were a couple of miles away. Also, "At the Edge of the Cliff," by Myra A. Wiggins, conveys the idea of distance; in this particular case, however, the diagonal lines in the middle distance prove valuable helpmates.

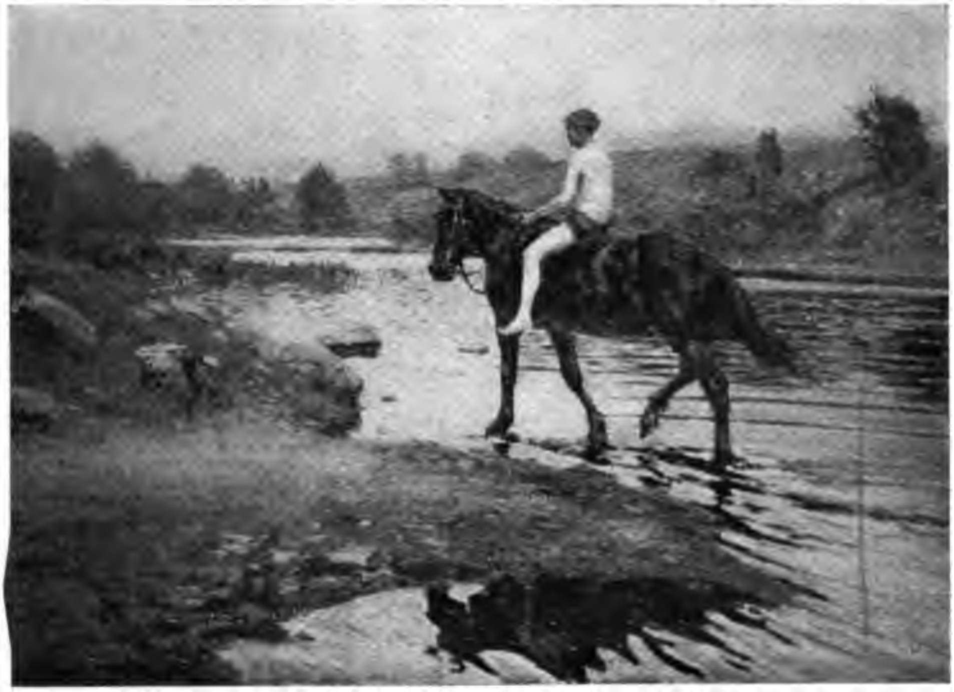
In backgrounds that depict open country or the sea, the horizontal and diagonal lines generally



FLASHING SUNLIGHT. *Eva Watson Schütze.*
(Fig. 85)



MOTHER AND CHILD. *Geo. de Forrest Brush.*
(Fig. 87)

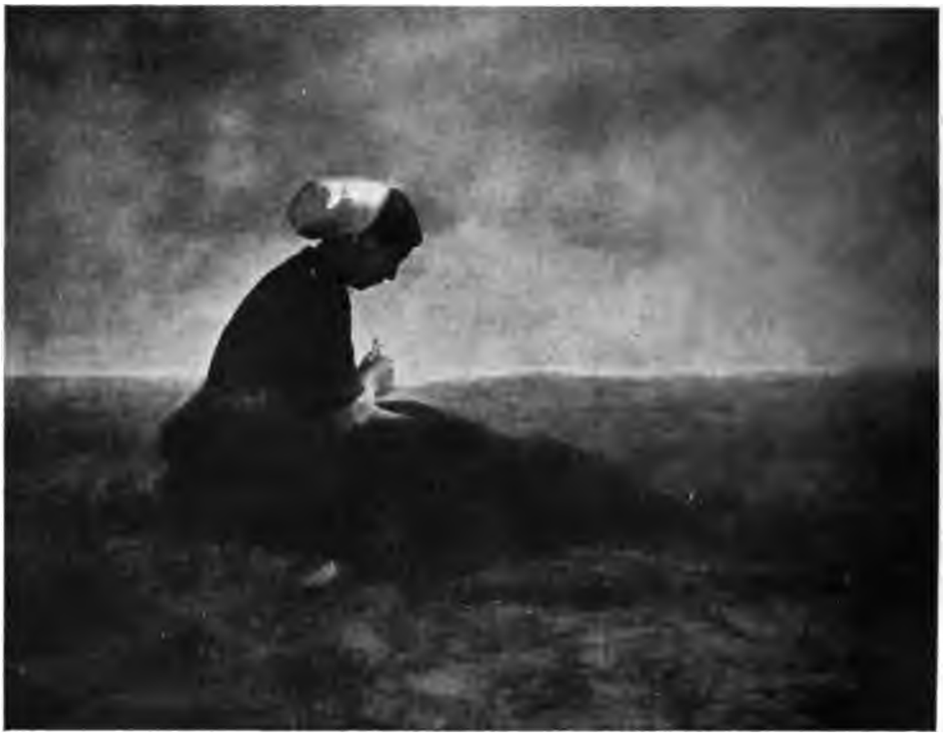


YOUNG HORSEMAN. (Fig. 99) Richard Lorenz.

prevail. In Fig. 89 the horizontal line divides the dark figure into a triangular and a rhomboid shape, the latter, larger in area, skilfully balances the silhouette of the upper one against the sky. The picture has long been recognized as a masterpiece of pictorial photography and there is hardly any fault to find with it. It is a typical form of composition of a seated figure against the sky, and is well worth repeating by younger amateurs. By repeating, of course, I do not mean slavish imitation, but merely a clever appliance of the same principles to new subjects of a similar character.

. Fig. 95, "Summer," by C. Yarnall Abbott, is remarkable for its unconventional treatment. The figure is placed almost in the center, under ordinary circumstances a dangerous proceeding. The picture is divided into two parts, the darker part formed by the silhouettes of the branches and the figure, and the lighter part by the water. The two parts are connected and flow into each other by the diagonal shape of the figure and its shadows, the suggestion of waves, and the arrangement of the overhanging branch (also diagonal in tendency), which she has grasped with her arms. The feeling of air and water, and the untrammeled grace of the human body (in the original) are beautifully carried out.

As soon as the background does not present a large part of the sky, and is shut off by trees or buildings, only a treatment of foreground and middle distance is possible. This generally concentrates the interest more in the figure. Compare Figs. 88 and 99. The mass of light in Fig. 88 forms a stronger



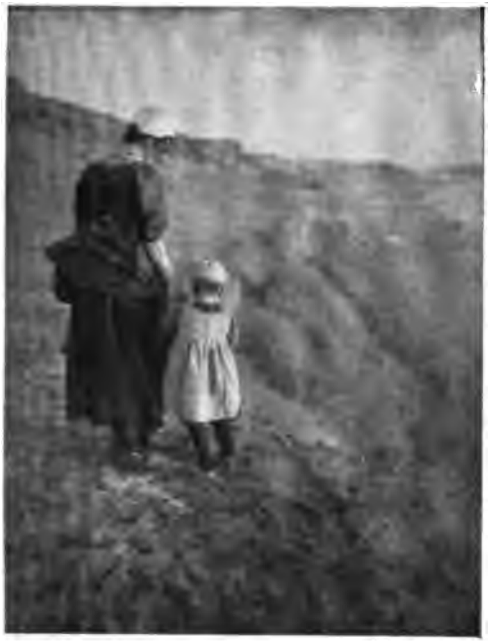
THE NET MENDER. (Fig. 89) *Alfred Stieglitz.*

attraction than the figure and carries out my former argument that the distance should be subdued. Also the background in F. L. Willard's "Spring Song," contains too many details, but as they are subordinated to the figure and in no way obtrusive one has really no fault to find with it.

The light effect in "The Old Method" (Fig. 97), by R. J. Hillier is not convincing, it suggests *positive* manipulation, but it is right as far as it gives the upper part of the figure the strongest lighting. In this instance the trees are so far back and so cleverly broken up that they suggest distance. As an object lesson of proper relations of foreground, middle distance, and distance, it can be recommended.

Figs. 85 and 86 show two curious examples where the background consists merely of a middle distance. This flattens the picture and takes away the suggestion of space and atmosphere, but adds a decorative quality. Both backgrounds show the diagonal division line with the application of verticals. Fig. 85 is particularly fortunate in that respect.

A similar decorative effect but one that is still capable of expressing depth is accomplished by applying merely the far distance as background. In the "Decorative Study," by Robert Demachy, it was originally a middle distance but by blurring it, it assumed the effect of distance. One might argue that the flowerstalks in this picture represent the foreground, but they really belong



THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF. M. A. Wiggins.
(Fig. 93)

to the figure; as soon as only the upper part of a figure is seen, we cannot speak of any foreground. The arch-like shape of the top of the picture helps the decorative quality. The picture would not look half as well without it. Trimming on this order should only be attempted if the subject and its treatment warrant it. The parallel diagonals of the flowerstalks and the silhouette of the foliage against the sky (balancing the figure), furnish a good support to the curved boundary line. The light spot of the sky was originally rectangular in form. It necessitated a change, as it would have been too conspicuous and would have spoiled the picture.

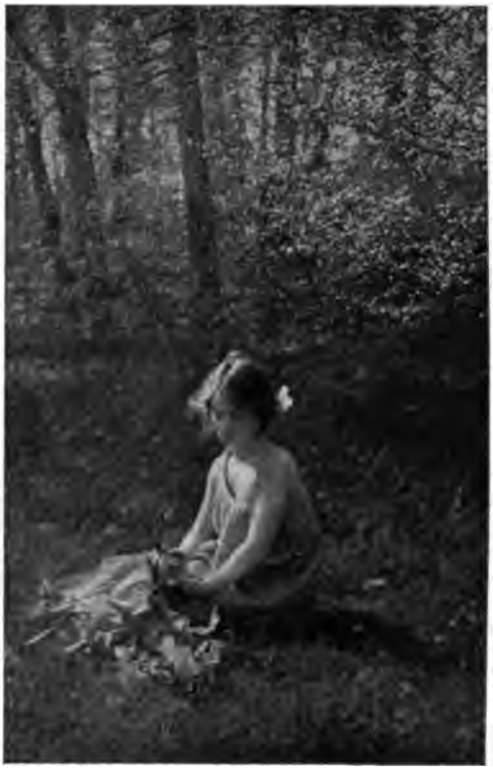
The de Forrest Brush picture, Fig. 87, carries out the silhouette idea against the background (although in a rather haphazard manner), which shows us a glimpse of hilly country, a trifle indistinct but still sufficient to make it interesting. This is an idea which was in frequent use with the Old Masters. Nearly all their Madonna pictures with elaborate backgrounds, and many of their portraits, show this arrangement. It has the advantage of not interfering with the figures and yet conveying space beyond. In all other pictures the background has to be connected by lines and masses with the figures, in this arrangement the latter are isolated by the silhouette idea, and the landscape is merely an accessory, while in modern composition the landscape background frequently comes dangerously near sharing the interest with the figures.

We have still to review a few examples that are more or less exceptional in character. "'Shelling Peas," by Alfred Stieglitz (Fig.

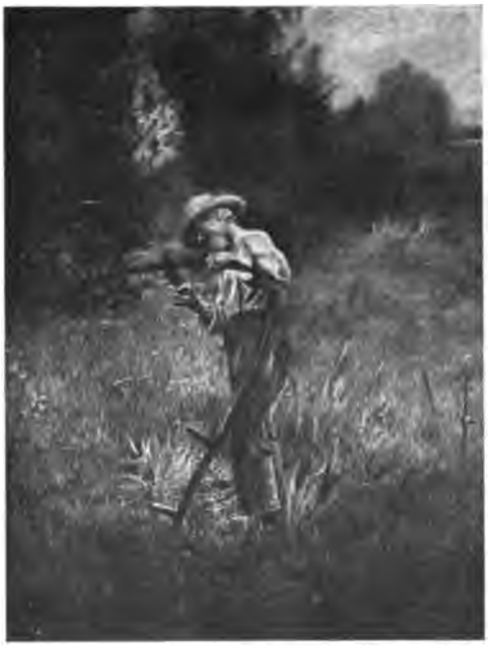
"SUMMER." (Fig. 95) C. Y. Abbott.

94), made as early as 1887, is curious because it is composed on the same principles as an interior. Any subject with a wall immediately behind the figure, of course can only deal with foreground and middle distance, and if crowded with objects, as this one is, can only be treated like an interior. The angular shape of the figure and basket complement each other. There is a vague suggestion of the angular division of Diag. 44. The pole of the tent assumes the same important part as the archer's bow in Fig. 79.

The foliage in Fig. 92 is treated like an indoor portrait background, but the spots of light flickering through the leaves make it more snappy. The figure is treated as a light silhouette against a middle tint ground, but its outlines, although very decided in character, do not assume any interesting shape. The picture is good in detail and presumably as a likeness but does not show much knowledge of pictorial composition.

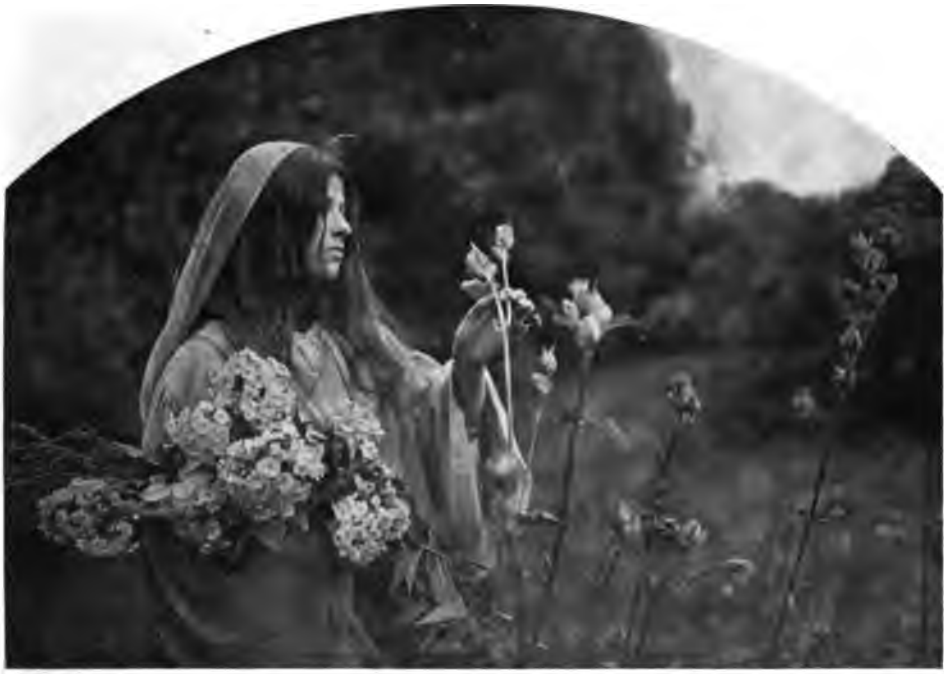


"SPRING SONG." (Fig. 96) F. L. Williard.

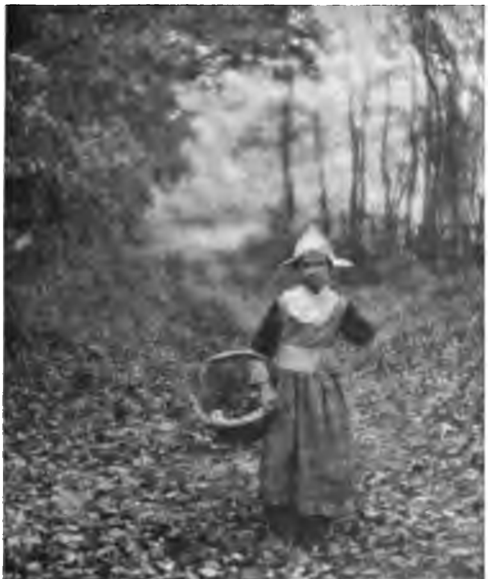


THE OLD METHOD. (Fig. 97) R. J. Hillier.

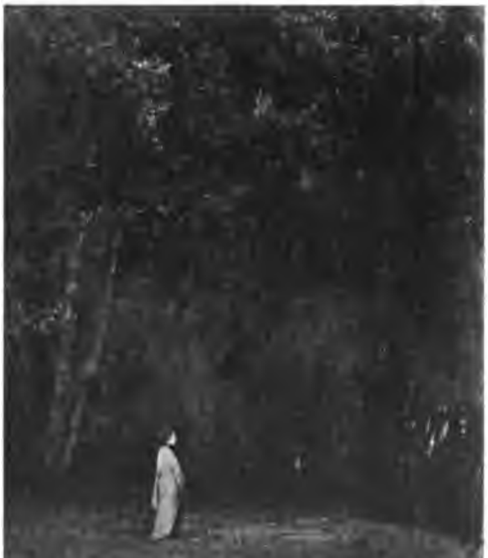
Fig. 90, "The Bob Sled," by H. Hall, shows a blurred foreground and a more distinct middle distance, but the triangular cut of snow is so large and decided in form that it balances the detail of the background. The diagonal tendency of the figures, prompted by the subject they depict, is well managed and helped considerably by the curved line of one of the tree trunks. Any object in motion should always be represented in such a way that it conveys the most characteristic attitude produced by the motion. A bob sled is



DECORATIVE STUDY. (Fig. 91) *Robert Demachy.*



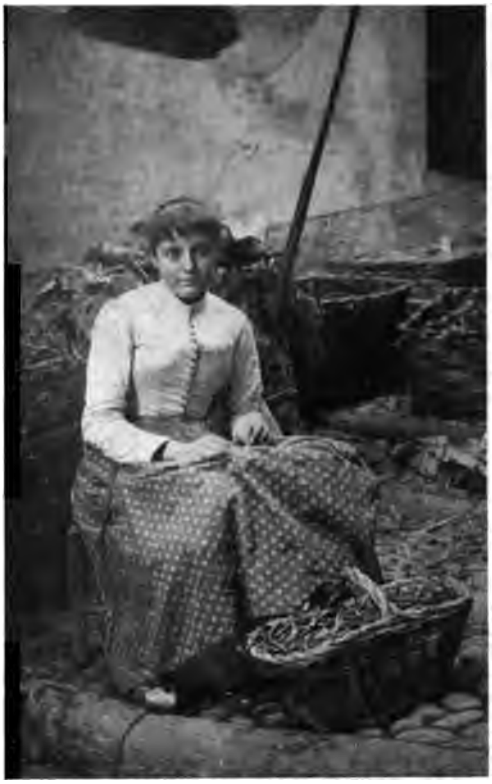
LITTLE PEASANT GIRL. *J. G. Bennett.*
(Fig. 88)



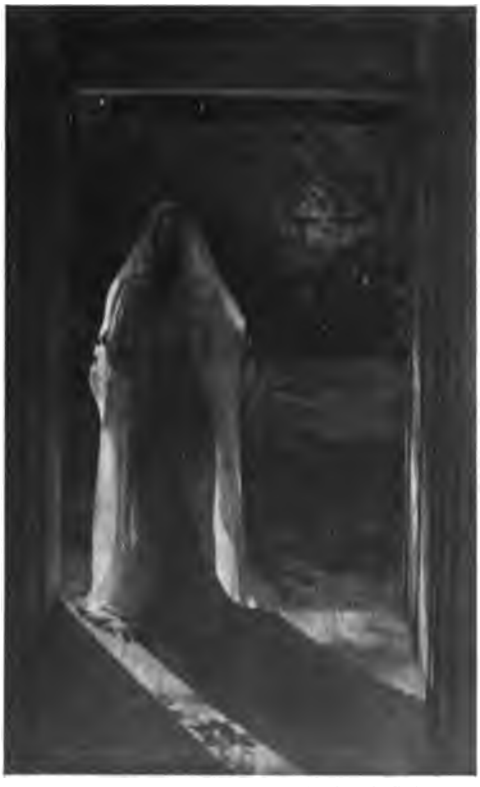
SOLITUDE. *L. A. Armer.*
(Fig. 100)

long in shape, and moves diagonally. It therefore should be represented, if possible, as in this case, in its full length and in a slanting position, and not in a perspective view.

Fig. 100, "Solitude," by Laura Adams Armer is a go-between of a landscape and figure composition. It is meant as a figure composition, and the draped vision (resembling some female Dante) is treated with utmost care. It is neither. For a figure composition the woman is entirely too small, and for a landscape composition the treatment of the background is too monotonous. And yet it is interesting for the clever use of a small white spot against the unusually large area of a dark tint. Somehow she has accomplished her intention of producing a poetic impression in the beholder. The low diagonal division cutting into the figure and dividing the entire surface into a triangular middle tint, a white spot, and a dark plane is exceedingly clever. I believe the success of the effect is entirely dependent on the placing of the figure. It is just in the right place.

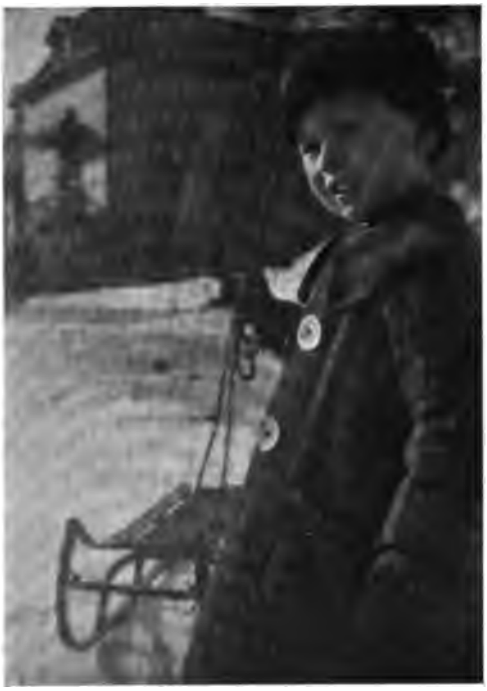


SHELLING PEAS. (Fig. 94) ***Alfred Stieglitz.***



Annie W. Brigman.
MADONNA OF THE PEACH TREE. (Fig. 98)

"The Madonna of the Peach Tree" (Fig. 99), by Annie W. Brigman, is quite an unusual composition. It is an odd version of the Japanese vista idea, but I do not consider it particularly advisable to arrange an upright frame-like shape within an upright frame. As it is, it represents a combination of an interior and out-of-doors scene. The lighting is skilful and really makes the



WINTER TIME. (Fig. 86) *H. Hall.*

picture. But both figure and background are too indistinct to convey anything but a confused idea of the meaning of the picture. The straight angular shape of the figure was the only one possible that would harmonize with the decided vertical and horizontal lines of the open doorway. Pictorial photographers of this kind should be encouraged; they at least show an ambitious effort, a desire to experiment and to utilize the principles of composition for some new combination.

I wonder if my readers have noticed that nearly all the figures in the illustrations accompanying this article carry out the triangular idea, or the quadrilateral shape with a triangular top as explained in Diag. 35. The only exceptions are Figs. 95, 97, and 99. Even

THE BOBSLED. (Fig. 90) *H. Hall.*

Figs. 89 and 94 are really triangular shapes. This is no mere coincidence. As stated before they are the typical forms, and occur in 70 per cent. of all pictures. I merely mention this again, as I want to lay special emphasis in these discussions upon the fundamental, most universal principles and forms. If we have a thorough knowledge of these, it will be comparatively easy to branch out and to make ourselves familiar with and finally master all these and subtler elements of composition, that no book on composition can teach. They are entirely dependent on instinct, intuition, good taste, call it whatever you choose, but these qualities nobody has ever and nobody will ever possess without these principles and forms that have guided and made pictorial representation what it is to-day.

CHAPTER X

One-Figure Composition.– Difference Between Portraiture and Pictorialism.—Suitable Subjects.—Values.—The Connecting Link.—Texture.—On the Rendering of Flesh Values.—With Thirteen Illustrations and and Four Diagrams.

IN DISCUSSING one-figure composition which will furnish the main topic of this paper, I do not intend to dwell upon portraiture, but I would like to make clear the difference between a portrait and a pictorial figure.

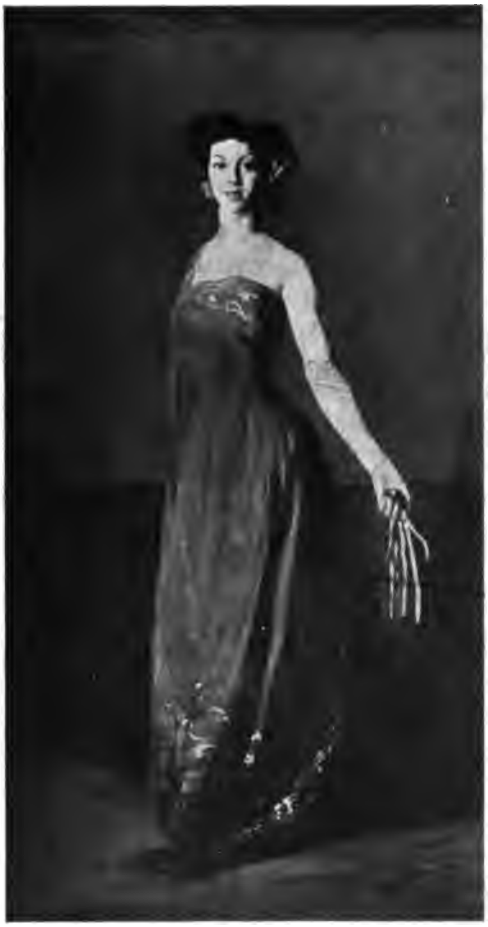
Portraiture is a specialty. An accurate likeness and a characteristic pose are the main objects. The whole interest is concentrated upon the face, and every other consideration is sacrificed to it. A portrait is rarely a pictorial masterpiece, and a pictorial representation is hardly ever a good portrait.

In pictorial composition there is no limitation. The aim is to produce something beautiful and not a record. The human figure can be used to express the whole gamut of human emotion and shown in every attitude and action that is pleasant to contemplate.

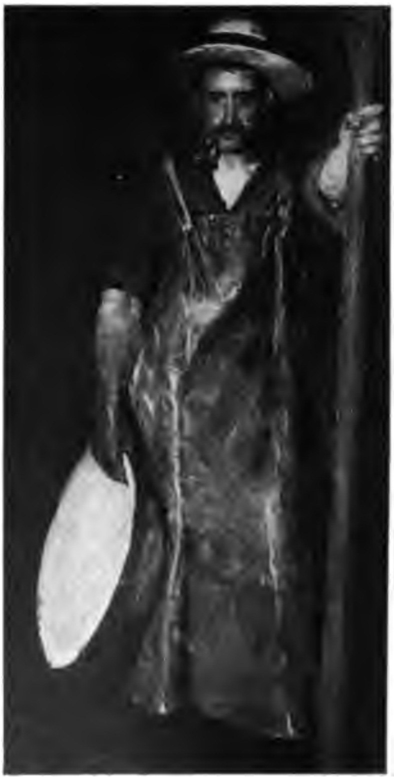
Of course, one-figure composition is somewhat limited in expression for pictorial purposes. A striking pose is often deemed sufficient. You may ask how does it then differ from portraiture. Well, let us look at the "Spanish Dancer," by Robert Henri (Fig. 113) and Chas. W. Hawthorne's "Man with Oar," Fig. 112. Nothing simpler could be imagined. Each depicts an interesting type in a natural pose. And yet nobody would consider them portraits. Why? The answer in most cases would be, there is something about them that one does not associate with portraiture, something more picturesque, more free and spontaneous. They were not made for the face alone, but treated in a broader manner, to present a type of humanity without subterfuge, merely to please the artist. And for that reason we find a stronger emphasis of line, a more unconventional pose, a finer handling of detail. What portraitist would venture to represent an arm like that of the dancer, or introduce a big white spot like the pan of the fisherman in the lower part of an upright. Portraitists are perhaps too much the slaves of the public, but even the best can not overcome certain restrictions; they have to be matter of fact and can not allow themselves many flourishes for mere beauty's sake.

One-figure composition is perhaps most suitable to simple depictions of types like figures 69, 71, 83, 84, 89, 112, 113, etc., that are interesting in themselves and do nothing in particular. Costume studies do not fare quite as well. One expects some explanation, some meaning. Fig. 70 is called

"Hypatia," but it could just as well be somebody else. Simple folks represented at some occupation like Figs. 102 and 108 are mildly effective. The people represented are not particularly picturesque or interesting and are helped by the accessories that explain the reason of their existence. Genre studies and story-telling pictures like 67, 80, and 101, have the true picture quality, but one-figure compositions are apt to look like still life, unless they contain some dramatic or poetic element like 80, 95, 96, and 103. Mrs. G. Kasebier's well known "The Manger," is treated in a decorative way like Robert Demachy's 91.



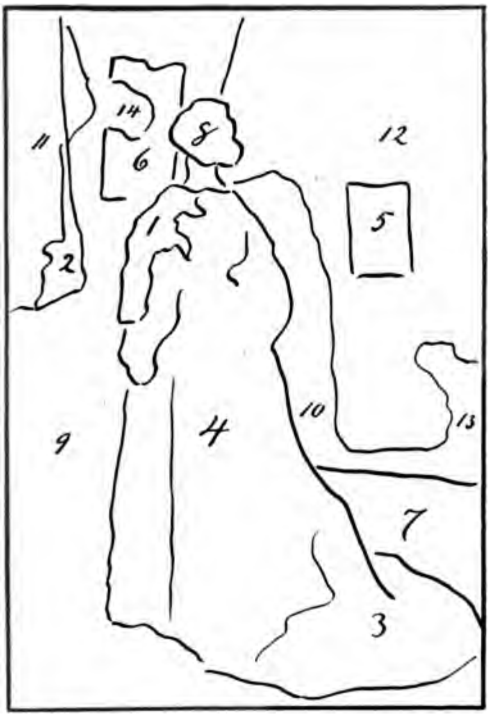
SPANISH DANCER. (Fig. 113) ***Robert Henri.***



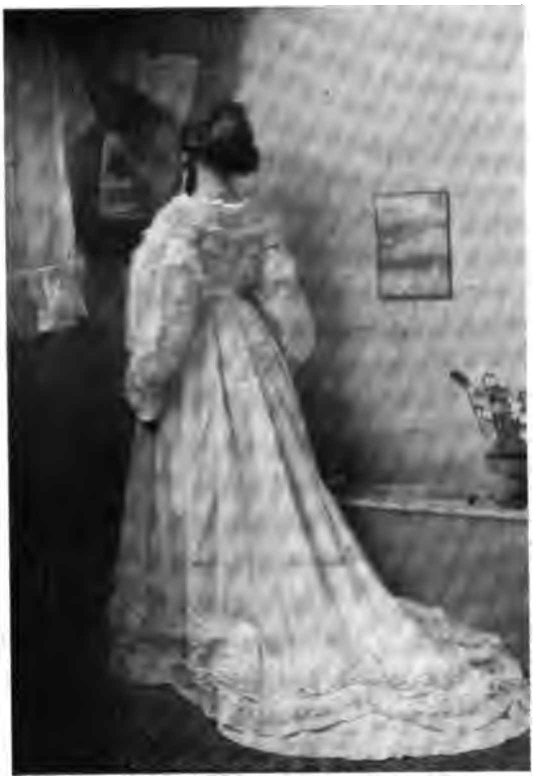
MAN WITH OAR. *C. W. **Hawthorne.*** (Fig. 112)

On the placing of the figure I have talked in previous chapters and I have nothing further to add, at least in regard to one-figure composition. What we have to analyze more carefully are those elements that enter into composition aside from the placing of the figure and the arrangement of lines and masses. The most important of them is "the relation of values."

A correct rendering of values consists of giving each object, plane, and defined shape that special tint or tonal gradation which expresses best their color and texture and to bring them into an harmo-

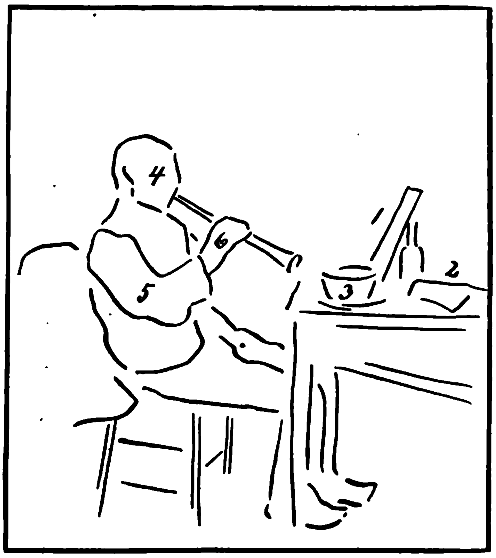


(Diag. 48)

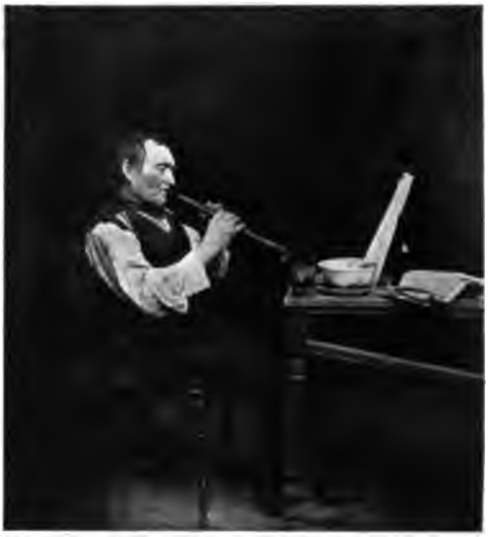


TRYING ON AN OLD GOWN. *Bessie Buehrmann.*
(Fig. 106)

nious relation with all the other monochrome effects of the picture. Every picture is cut up into numerous shapes of different tonality. Look for instance at Bessie Buehrmann's "Trying on an Old Gown" (Fig. 106), and at Diag. 48, in which I have tried to analyze figure and background into its various elements of lightness and darkness. The highest light effect occurs in plane one. It is nowhere repeated. Four which represents a large area comes nearest to it in lightness, but is not as valuable as accents two and three which are just a trifle lower in key. Plane three balances the "bunched" composition of the upper left corner, in which the curtain plays an important part. Almost everything might be changed in the composition, but it could not get along without the curtain. The middle tint is furnished by the wall and settee to the right, planes seven and twelve, and supplemented in a vague manner by eleven. Nine, the dark part of the composition, is skilfully balanced by ten on the other side of the figure and by thirteen. The monotony of twelve is broken by the frame five and the reflected image in the mirror. Six, which is really the point of interest in this picture, is praiseworthy for the subdued way in which it is handled. Eight furnished the one deep note of small dimensions vaguely repeated in thirteen. Planes one, three, four, and eight with the help of the curtain and the

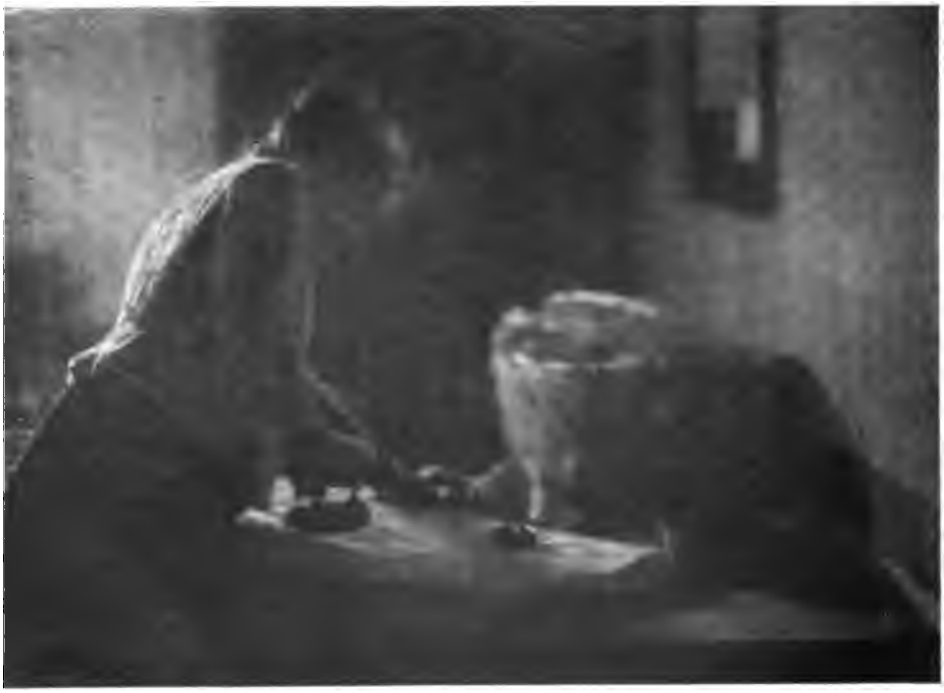


(Diag. 47)

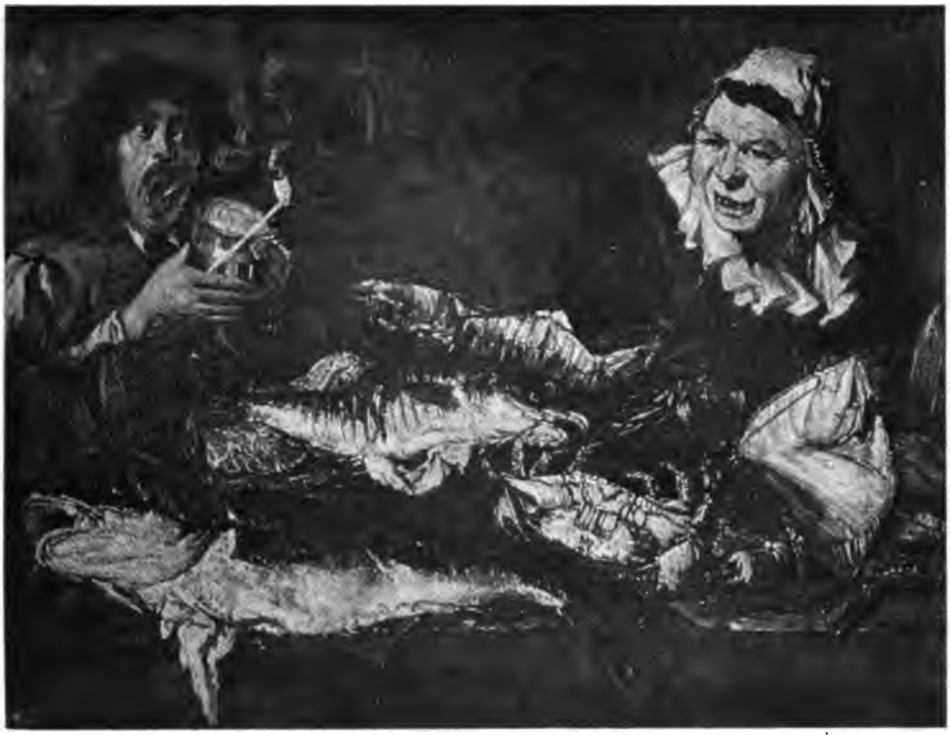


THE FLUTE PLAYER. (Fig. 101) ***Dumont.***

well defined large areas of lightness and darkness, nine and seven, twelve, make the picture and the successful silhouette of the figure, but brilliancy and a higher pictorial quality was only gained by the introduction of the four small



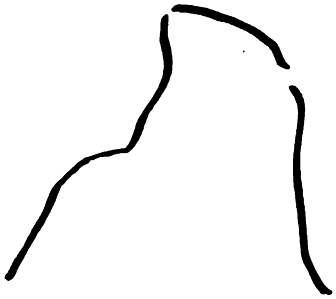
TUESDAY. (Fig. 108) *W. F. James.*

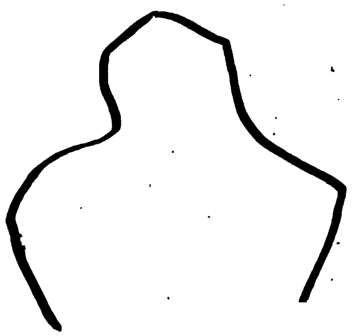


HILLE BOBBE. (Fig. 107) *Franz Hals.*

but animated planes of fourteen, six, five, and thirteen, which show a variety of minor tonal gradations.

"The Flute Player," by Dumont (Fig. 101), is one of the ablest photographic genre studies I have ever come across. It is perhaps a trifle too much in profile, but that was undoubtedly the easiest way to manage a variety of detail. He placed the strongest light on the objects of the table, Diag. 47. Planes one, two, and three are all lighter than the face and hand. Even the shirtsleeve five is lighter. This arrangement gives a beautiful tonal effect to the face and hand, five and six. The rest is of the picture is kept up very much in





(Diag. 49)

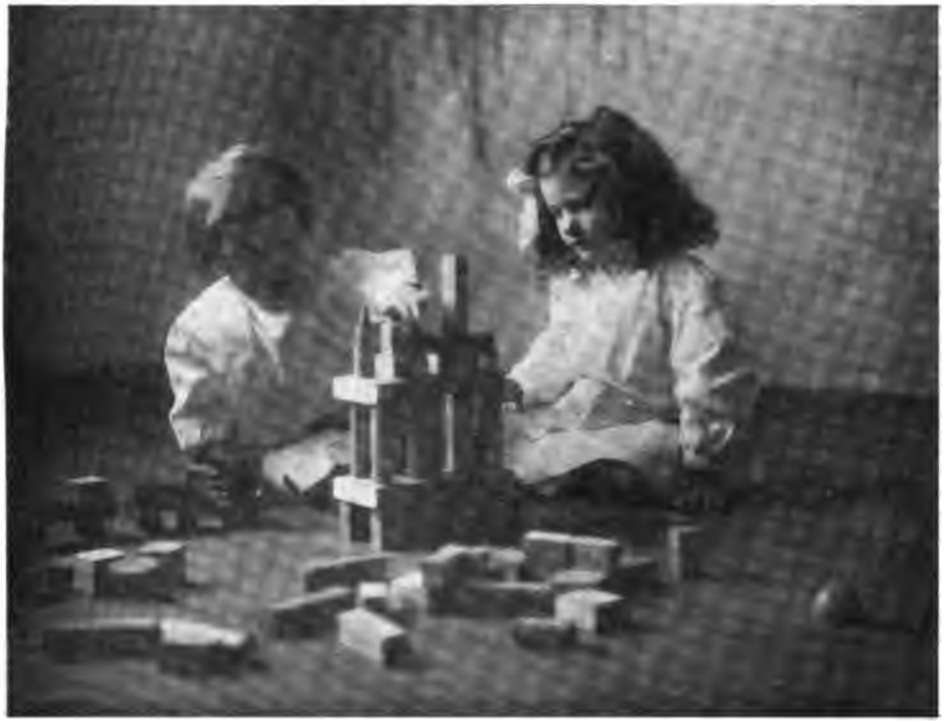
THE MANGER. (Fig. 103) Gertrude Kasebier.

one key, with a beautiful variation of minor gradation. This is what I call a good tonal composition.

It also introduces us to a new agent that proves at times most valuable in figure composition, particularly so in arrangement of two figures, or one figure with some conspicuous object nearby. This is the connecting link. If you have two bulky shapes in a picture. as indicated in Diag. 49, they look isolated. And this can be accomplished only by some strong lines that combine the two subjects, Diag. 50, which carries out the arrangement of the famous "Hille Bobbe" painting, by Franz Hals. In it the undulating lines of the fish form the connecting link. In Dumont's picture it is the flute. We have the same problem in W. F. James' "Tuesday," Fig. 108. There were the woman and the wash basket, they were separated and had to be combined. Nothing was more natural than to do this by the ironing board. As both shapes are rather dark the board is cleverly lighted. In Edmund Stirling's "Drawing Lesson" (Fig. 110) it is the hand of the mother holding the pencil and the drawing pad. The building blocks in Jeanne E. Bennett's "Toyhouses," furnish a rather elaborate connecting link. In none of these pictures the problem is solved as well as in the Franz Hals picture. The lines have true linear beauty and really combine two separate masses.

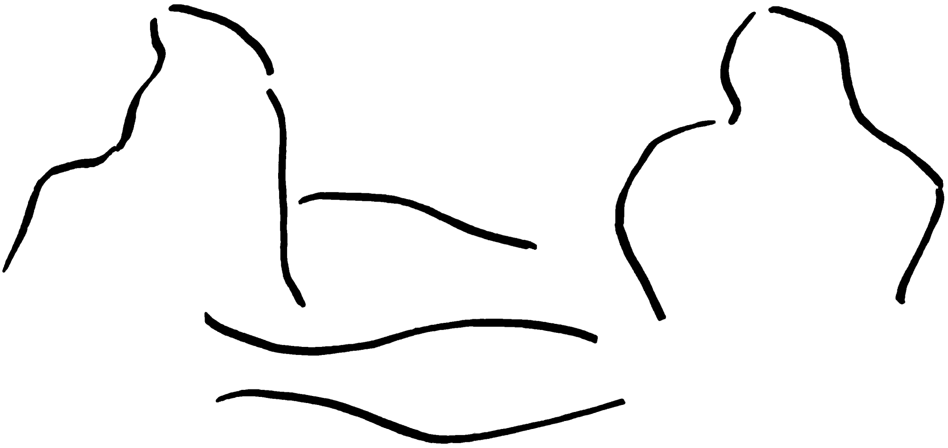
Another element that demands a few words of discussion is texture. To show the surface quality of a fabric, of different kinds of wood, of metal utensils, or any other object is always effective, and presents a truly photographic

MOTO PLAYER (Fig. 104) H. G. French.

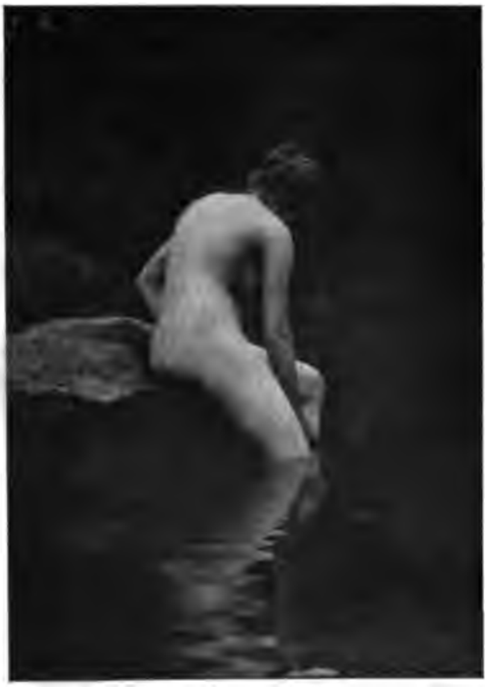


TOYHOUSES. (Fig. 109) Jeanne E. Bennett.

quality. It is easier in that medium than in any other. It is well done in Figs. 101 and 102, and the oilcloth apron of the fisherman in Hawthorne's painting is excellent. So are the fish in the Franz Hals picture. In Figs. 104, 108, and 109, the quality is absolutely lacking. And the reason is that they are tone pictures. Vivid detail and textural charm do not go with blurred and dark tonal effects. The reader can easily find out for himself by



(Diag. 50)

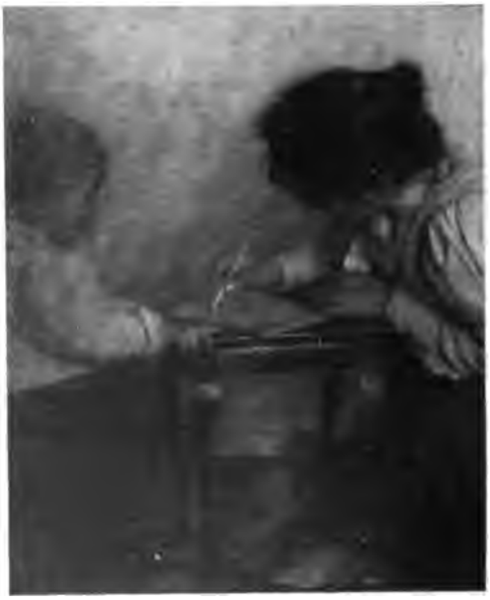


WATER NYMPH. (Fig. 105) *Chas. I. Berg.*

reviewing the various illustrations of my articles whether a picture is enhanced by texture or not. Some undoubtedly are, while others would look foolish if an undue share of attention would be bestowed upon some minute and unattractive pattern or grain. The subtlety of tonal values in Fig. 101 is largely due to the exquisite textural representation.

An important feature in every figure composition is the complexion, the flesh color of faces, hands, or such parts of the body as might be shown. It should be ordinarily in a much higher key than it is in most photographs. The arm and neck in Henri's picture has a delightful luminous quality. He subordinated everything else to it. I do not see any use of representing human flesh as dark as it is done in Figs. 103, 104, 108, and 110. There is no excuse for it. It is unreasonable and in no way attractive or beautiful. As a realistic study of flesh values (notice the dark hand) Hawthorne's fisherman is to be recommended. Fig. 101 shows a fair appreciation of the luminosity of the human face, although expressed in a minor key. The "Sleeping Girl" (Fig. 111), by the Parrish Sisters, shows good light distribution and modeling but is deficient in flesh values if compared to the Henri picture. The composition is noteworthy as it has been managed in the shape of an exaggerated oblong, one of the most difficult shapes to master.

"The Water Nymph" of Charles I. Berg. (Fig. 105), in the S shape deserves its reputation as a photographic nude. It has rarely been excelled. It is matter of fact but



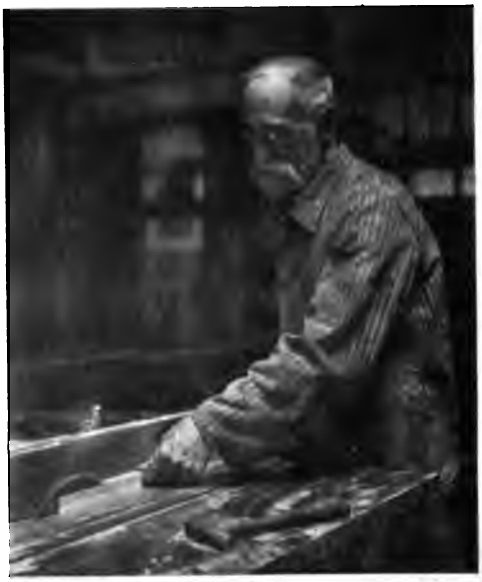
THE DRAWING LESSON. *E. Sterling.*
(Fig. 110)

the form is shown to good advantage and the light flesh quality has been preserved.

In posing a nude for photographic purposes (and I believe beter results can be obtained by limiting oneself to one figure like LeBegue rather than grouping a whole bunch like Herzog), one should be exceedingly careful to show the figure in such way that the lines are really beautiful. Few models are perfect in form, and one should only reveal such views as approach perfection.

The Peterson picture, "At the Saw Bench" (Fig. 102), is a good example of depicting an occupation. I think clearness is preferable to the mushiness of Figs. 108 and 104. In the latter one is at loss to say what the figure is doing. The various accessories, the silk kimono, the gong, the roll picture, and musical instrument would surely have been more beautiful if depicted a little more in detail and with textural distinction.

"The Manger" (Fig. 103), is a most ambitious effort. The background with its long diagonal and short vertical lines is masterly and the pose of the figure and the lighting of the drapery excellent. The only shortcoming is the darkness of the face and hands.



AT THE SAW BENCH. *J. R. Peterson.*
(Fig. 102)

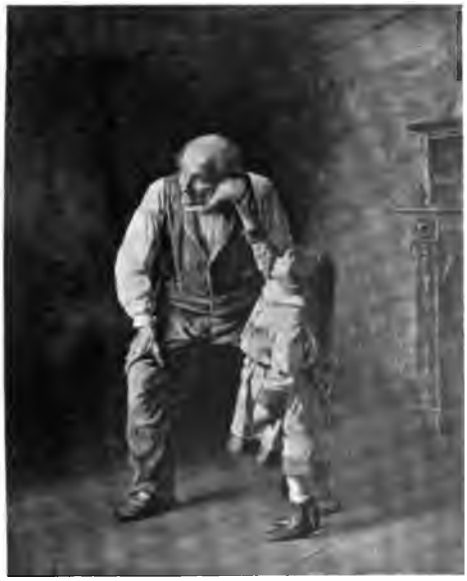
SLEEPING GIRL. (Fig. 111) *W. and G. Parrish.*

CHAPTER XI

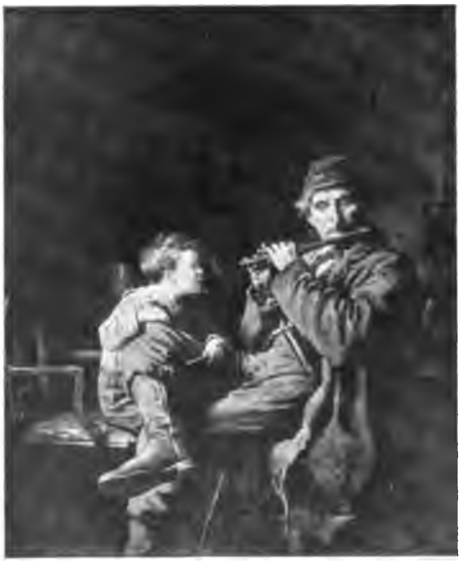
Two-Figure Composition.—Genre Subjects.—Various Combinations of Familiar Principles.—A Linear Experiment.—On the Placing of Heads.—A Circular Composition.—With Fifteen Illustrations and Two Diagrams.

IN TWO-FIGURE composition the choice of subjects has a much wider scope. A single figure always looks somewhat isolated, with two figures at one's disposal the picture becomes more animated. It becomes much easier to convey a meaning or sentiment, or to tell a regular story like Eastman Johnson in his "Fifer," Fig. 117, or "What the shell Says," Fig. 121.

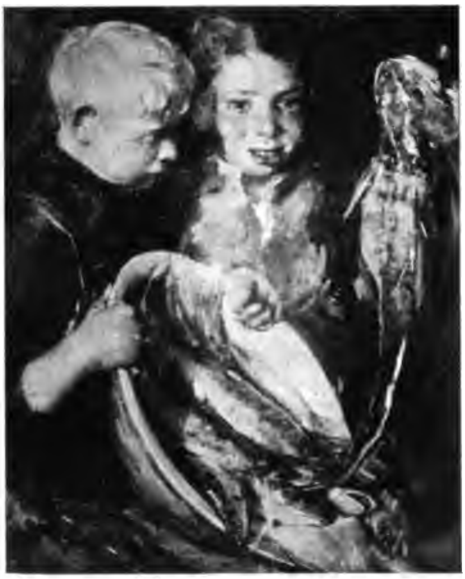
But some people object to story-telling. They look upon it as something unworthy of the higher ideals of art. By this they do not altogether mean that minute study of details and presentation of facts render productions of this kind uninteresting, but rather that they lack those qualities which are associated with the most advanced phases of modern art.



WHAT THE SHELL SAYS. *Eastman Johnson.*
(Fig. 121.)



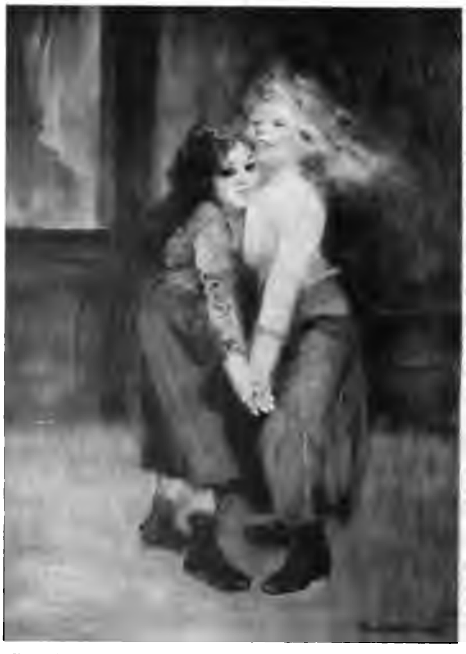
THE FIFER. *Eastman Johnson.*
(Fig. 117.)



CHILDREN WITH FISH. *C. W. Hawthorne.*
(Fig. 118.)

This objection to genre subjects has always seemed rather futile to me. Nobody with any pretense to taste will deny that those artists who devote the utmost care to insignificant objects (and who still enjoy the popular approval of the public as their esthetic shortsightedness is equivalent to the ordinary seeing capacity of the crowd)., are artistically inferior to those who master touch and technique. Fig. 121 can not compete with Hawthorne's "Children with Fish," Fig. 118, in artistic treatment. But how about the Little Dutch Masters who were genre painters in the strictest sense of the word (as was the Franz Hals in the last chapter), and who nevertheless understood to invest these popular subjects with a charm and fascination far beyond ordinary graphic power and force of draughtsmanship? And cannot also the paintings of Meissonnier be defended on the same grounds?

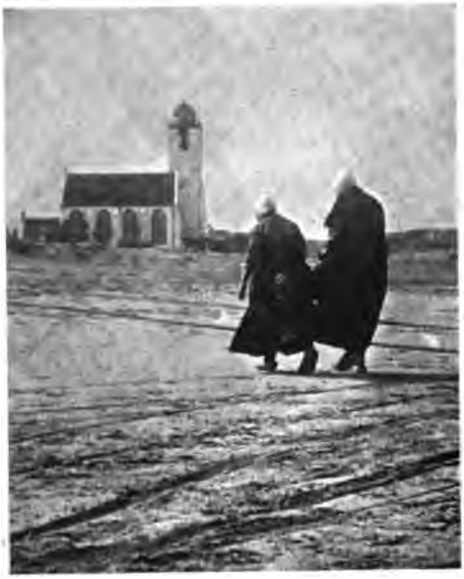
Let us investigate the matter a little more closely. It is extremely difficult to ascertain of what material a genre picture is constituted. An Eastman Johnson like Fig. 117 we would classify at once as genre. On the other hand if we are confronted with George Luks' "Eastside Dancers," Fig. 125, or Stieglitz's "Scurrying Home," Fig. 114, we would hesitate and prefer to call them "a realistic picture." And yet there is in both styles the same careful observation, the same striving to get at the secrets of certain types of humanity, the same desire to record completely and definitely their special traits. The difference seems to lie first in the conception, for it cannot be denied that all these pictures tell a story, and second in the treatment



EASTSIDE DANCERS. *Geo. B. Luks.*
(Fig. 125.)

The one is told *à la Dickens* in a popular way, the others in the manner of a writer of the modern realistic school (like Fig. 115), which may be some day just as popular as the other one.

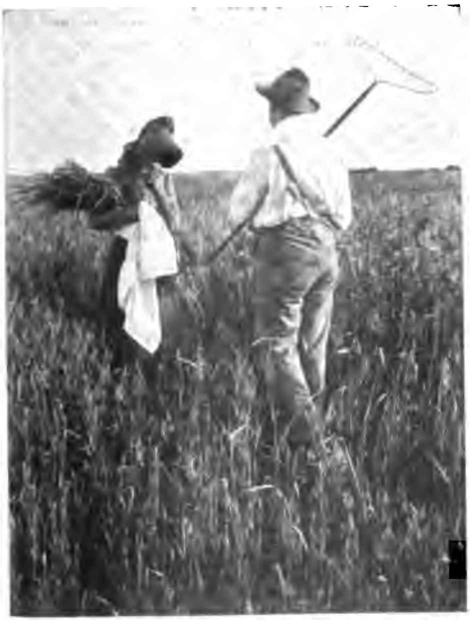
Although story-telling, if too anecdotal or too sentimental, like Fig. 119, is rather unesthetic in the pictorial representation of human figures, as long as they are seen separately and individually and not *en masse* as the impressionist painters depict them, I see no reason why genre subjects should be tabooed, as it depends after all on the way how they are treated.



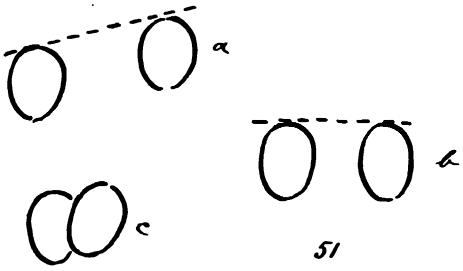
SCURRYING HOMEWARD. *Alfred Stieglitz.*
(Fig. 114.)

Figs. 114, 115, 118, 120, 124, 125, are pictures in the true sense of the word. Figs. 116 and 123 would pass as studies. Fig. 126, the charming "Mother and Child," by Adelaide Hanscom, is a decorative arrangement.

The parallelism of human shapes plays an important part in two-figure composition. We have it in Fig. 114 in the form of irregular shapes, and in Fig. 124 in the form of triangular shapes. Louis Fleckenstein's "A Pastorale," Fig. 122, shows us the repetition of similar figure in symmetrical arrangement. In his "The Hymn," Fig. 128, the figures are placed in too symmetrical a position. They remind one of a portrait rather than a picture. In W. J. Glackens' "At the Café Francis," Fig. 115, we have a combination of the S shape and a triangle. A different version of the S shape, cut into by a diagonal angular form, we have in Mary Cassatt's "Mother and Child," Fig. 120. The same in reverse fashion occurs in Eastman Johnson's "The Kiss," Fig. 127. Combinations like these will always produce an odd picturesque effect. In Fig. 121 we have a quadrilateral shape



COMING THROUGH THE RYE. *L. Fleckenstein.*
(Fig. 119.)



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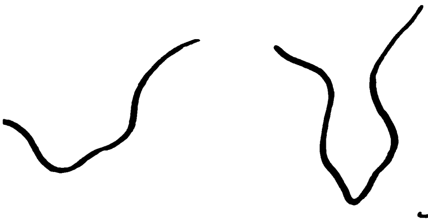

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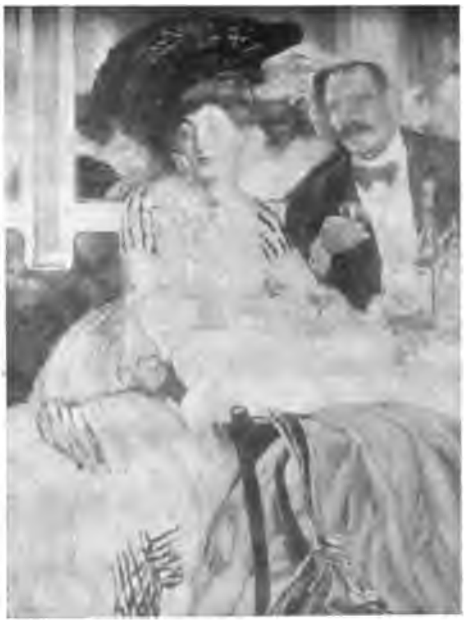
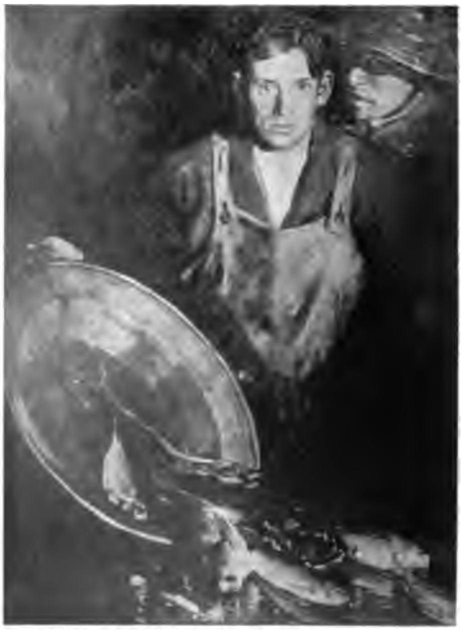
supplemented by two curves, one formed by the child and the other by the legs of the old man. It is a trifle elaborate and scarcely a graceful pose. Jeanne E. Bennett's "The Knitting Lesson," Fig. 123, carries out the simple diagonal division with a repetition of shapes. "The Portuguese Fishers," by Hawthorne, is an experiment with a triangular form and a diagonal ellipse. It is not quite successful. The connecting link is missing. If the men were looking at the fish instead of staring straight out of the picture it would be more convincing. Fig. 117 represents a rather interesting composition. In it can be traced the diagonal division, extended by the horizontal lines of the chair and elaborated by the small triangular form of the boy. The "Eastside Dancers," are conceived as an oval with a parallelism of diagonal shapes formed by the arms and legs. Fig. 126 is constructed as a triangle with a diagonal angular shape. But it is really constructed as an experiment in line composition, and, although not perfect, is one of the most successful ones that has come to my notice. The arrangement of the hands, the principal lines of the child's body and the slanting



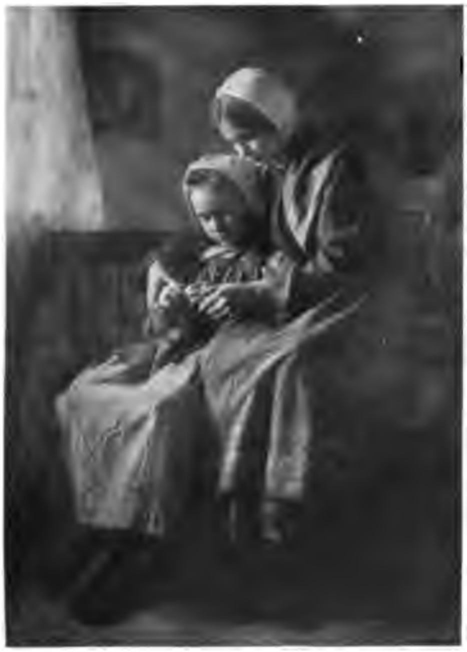
AT THE CAFÉ FRANCIS. *W. J. Glackens.*
(Fig. 115.)

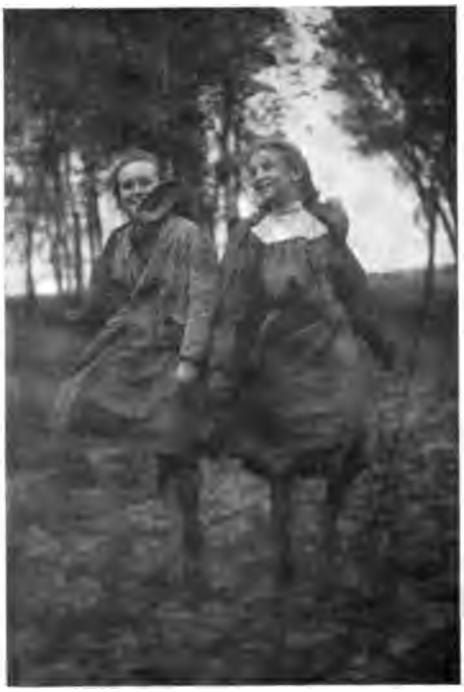


PORTUGUESE FISHERS. *C. W. Hawthorne.*
(Fig. 116.)

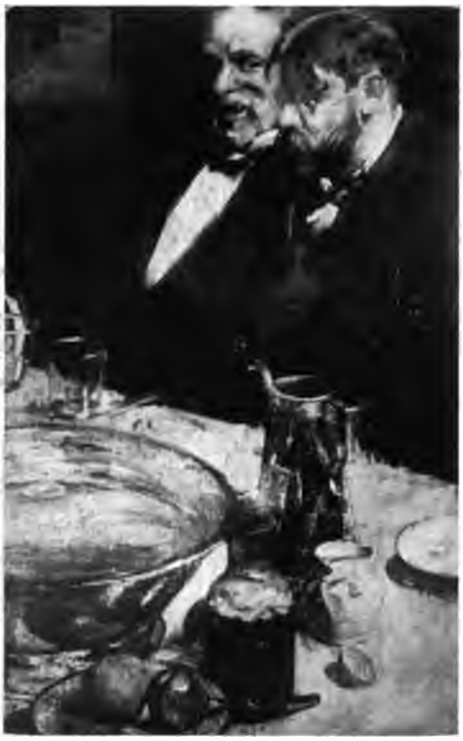
position of the mother's face are well thought out. The drawing in parts is exceedingly forceful. Also the drapery to the left is well managed. The lighter part of the garment is well spaced, but rather uncertain in its line work. Also the part where the arm to the right disappears in the drapery could have been more clearly defined.

The differentiation of values is not quite subtle enough. There is a certain monotony of grayness throughout the picture. The body of the child and the hands of the mother, even her drapery, are all in the same key. Of course I perfectly realize the difficulty of combining line composition with correct value. Miss Hanscom sacrificed all modeling in favor of a stronger accentuation of line, even to the extent of allowing the child's head to become almost a formless mass. Yet there is no reason why flat tints should be deprived of tonal variety. If the child's body could have been rendered a trifle lighter than the hands which support it, but could still remain a shade darker than the mother's face, the picture, no doubt, would have been greatly improved, at least as far as the suggestion of color goes.


THE KNITTING LESSON. *J. C. Bennett.*
(Fig. 123.)


A PASTORALE. *Louis Fleckenstein.*
(Fig. 122.)

One striking peculiarity in two-figure composition is the similarity in the position of the heads. There seems to be only three typical versions. Others may be possible but they are uncommon. The heads are either separated or grouped together. If they are separated a line from top to top would either form a straight (Diag. 51 *b*) or a diagonal line (Diag. 51 *a*). If they are together one is invariably situated lower than the other,



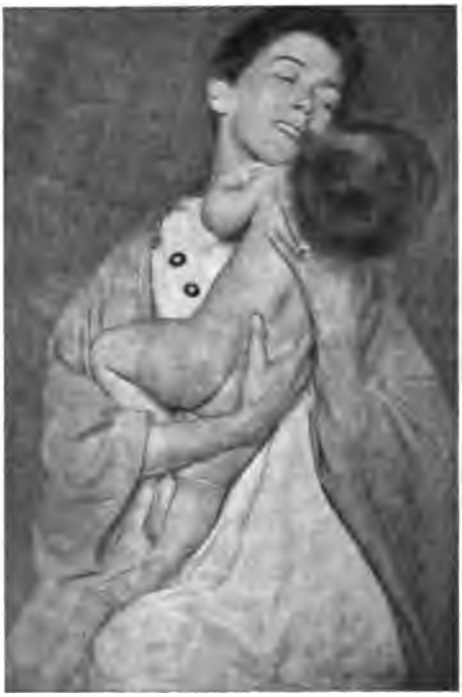
THE STORY. (Fig. 124.) *C. W. Hawthorne.*

if but a mere trifle (Diag. 51 *c*). The position of *c* with both heads on the same level is only possible in portraiture. The version *b* is also scarce. We have seen it in the Fleckenstein photo, Fig. 128. It is not pictorial and should be used as little as possible, excepting symmetrical decorative arrangements with a figure placed at the upright edge of the picture. In all other illustrations you will notice that the position will be either like *a* or *c*. Version *c* is a good vehicle to express sentiment. In that case the ovals of the face partly overlap each other, as in Figs. 120 and 127. In Fig. 126 the sentiment is carried out by the expression on the mother's face.

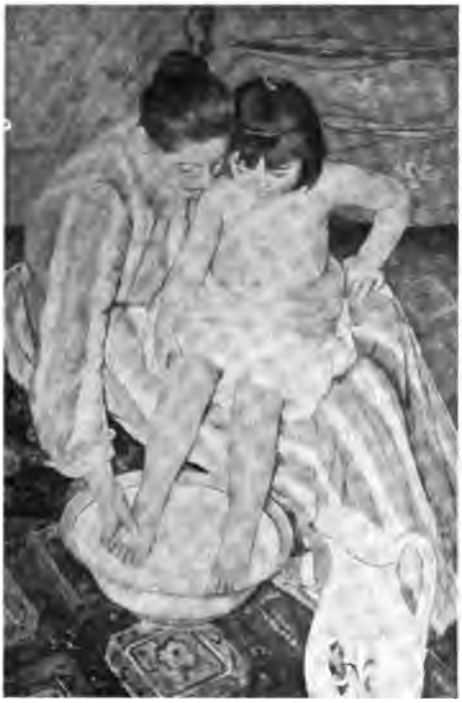
A three-quarter view and a full face view, Fig. 124, or a profile and three-quarter view, Fig. 121, are ordinarily the best combinations in two-figure compositions. Two profiles, three-quarter or full face views rarely look well. Variety is always desirable, in every phase of composition.

If the heads are separated, frequently a new problem enters. It is the space between the heads. It must be of some irregular but interesting shape as indicated in Diag. 52, or the heads, sometimes the whole figures, will look isolated and awkward as in Fig. 119. In Figs 114, 115, 122, and 128 the spacing is good, in the latter, however, a trifle too undecided. Fig. 117 represents a more elaborate shape and is not as good.

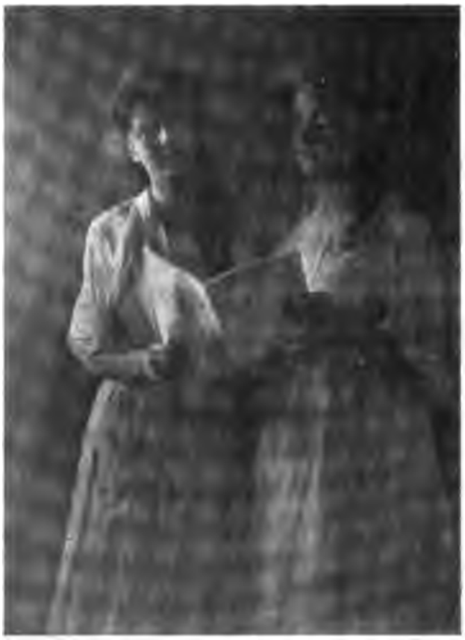
The connecting link should never be missing if two figures are separated. Fig. 117 is deficient in that respect. There should be something in the back-



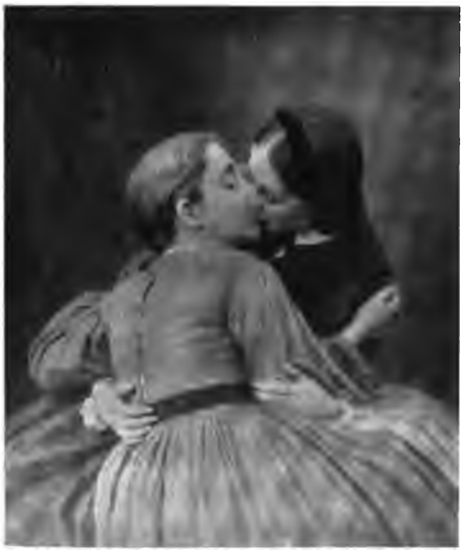
MOTHER AND CHILD. *Adelaide Hanscom.*
(Fig. 126.)



LA TOILETTE. (Fig. 120.) *M. Cassatt.*



THE HYMN. (Fig. 128.) *Louis Fleckenstein*



THE KISS. (Fig. 127.) *Eastman Johnson* ground, if merely a differentiation of tone, that would bring the two figures closer together. If two figures stand or walk very near to each other as in Figs. 114, 122, 128, it can be left to the space between the heads. The hymn book in the latter of course was necessary, as it is the only pictorial element in this picture. In Fig. 115 it is accomplished by the double angles of the lady's arm and the gentleman's arm and hand; in Fig. 121, by the little girl's arm holding the shell. In Fig. 119 it is entirely absent, and there is no unity in the picture.

A particularly interesting composition that calls for special analysis is Hawthorne's "Children with Fish," Fig. 118. There are four conspicuous shapes of different sizes: one large oval, the pan with the fish; two small ovals, the faces of the two boys; and the long irregular shape of the fish that is held up. Three of these forms are placed in a parallel way, the fourth and largest one in a diagonal shape. All four together make a sort of circular shape. A great painter would have made it more decided.

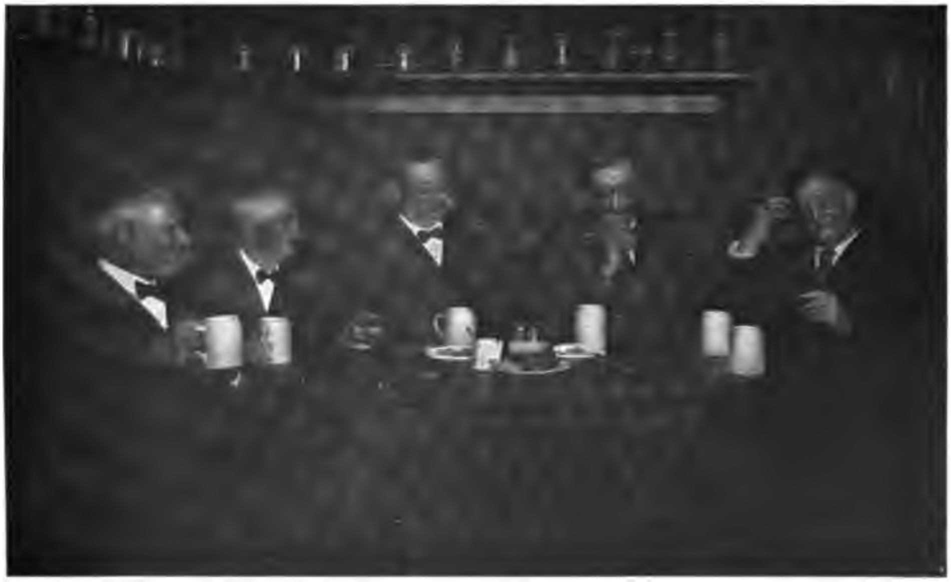
For the success of a composition depends as I have stated over and over again on some interesting irregular or, if possible, geometrical shape. It should not be overconspicuous to the beholder, but its form should be there to regulate all the elements of construction and render them as agreeable to sight. The eye has a natural inclination to unite opposite sides and corners, and traversing the surface of the picture it should be attracted first by one point, and then with perfect ease glide from this point to another, taking in all details, surprises, and beauties of the subject represented. And this the simplest forms do best.

CHAPTER XII

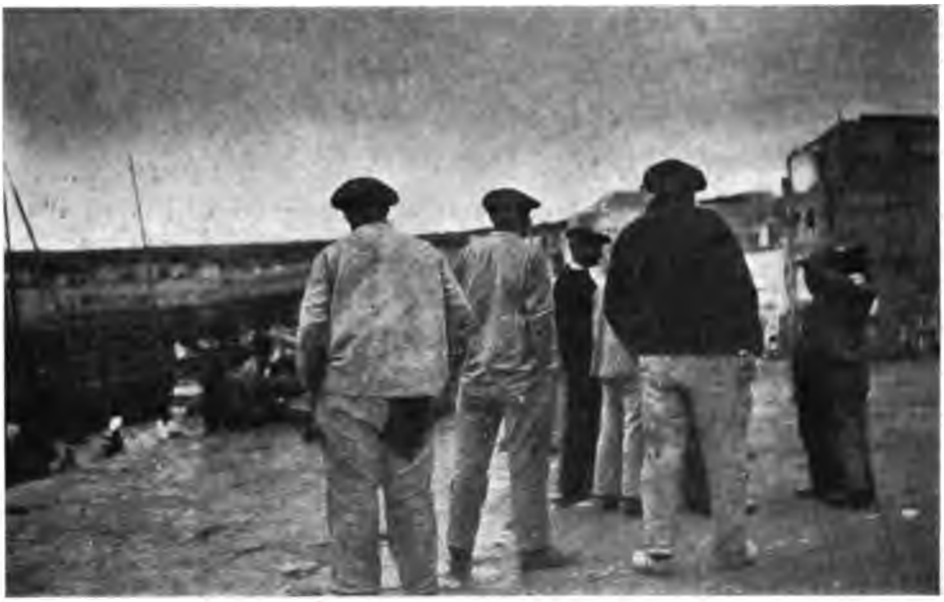
Composition of Three or More Figures.—Headlines and Juxtaposition.—Photographic Difficulties.—A New Departure.—With Thirteen Illustrations and Four Diagrams.

WE HAVE now come to the final discussion. Those of my readers, who have not merely read but studied my papers and practically experimented with the principles I wished to convey, will be by this time familiar with what I consider the essentials of landscape and figure composition. I have very little more to add and this last paper will be largely a review of all the varied elements of composition as applied to the accompanying illustrations.

Composition of three figures or more is largely a repetition or juxtaposition of shapes. We have repetition for instance in Figs. 129 and 136; juxtaposition in a decided fashion in Figs. 130, 131, and 132; a combination of both in Fig. 138.



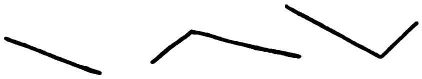
TWO STEINS. (Fig. 129.) *J. P. Kelmer.*



WAITING FOR FAIR WEATHER, BRITTANY. (Fig. 136.) *W. G. Corthell.*

Special attention should be devoted to the headline of Diag. 51. It becomes more complicated with a larger number of figures. It is either angular in tendency or curved. The Japanese artists were particularly careful as in everything pertaining to linear composition. In the three Yeddo street scenes of Shunsho we have the three forms of Diag. 53. The first one has an Oriental flavor. Our artists seldom use it. They prefer a line as in *a*, Diag. 54. The other two are in common use, particularly the third as seen in Fig. 136. The curved headlines, Diag. 55, are perhaps more graceful. The top one is probably the most common. Kelmer has used it in his "Two Steins," Fig. 129. The second is used by Eickemeyer, "The Dance," Fig. 138, which although made years ago can still claim of being one of the best photographic figure compositions. There should be a certain sweep and easy flow to these lines. If they are awkward the whole composition will look awkward.

Diag. 56 shows the triangular headline which is only possible in decorative designs like Abbot Thayer's "Caritas," Fig. 133. In diagram 54 I have tried to show the principle of juxtaposition. The figures are generally divided into one single figure (or two) and a group which contains the rest of the figures.



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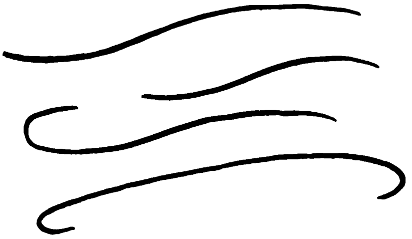

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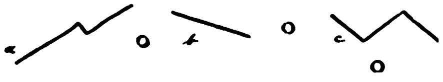

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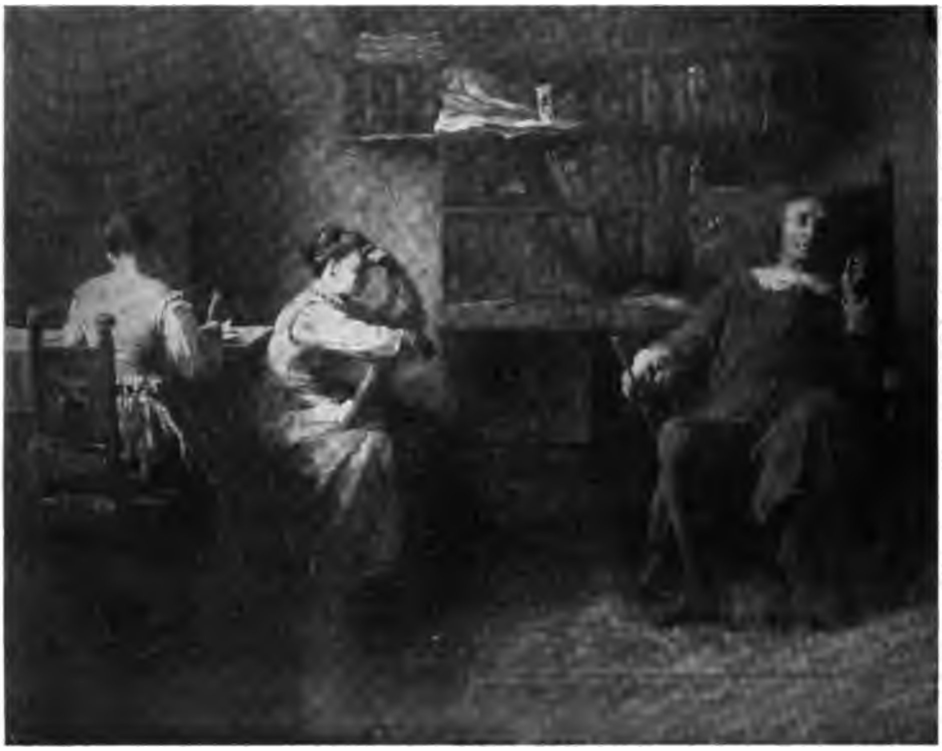
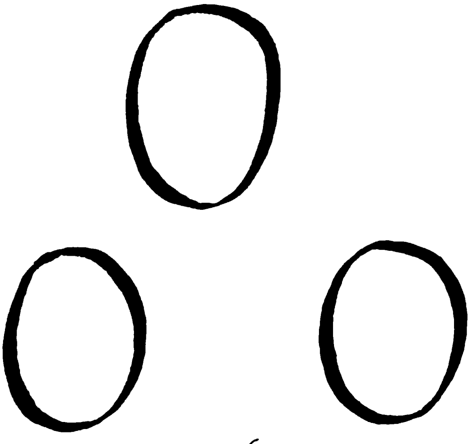


MILTON DICTATING TO HIS DAUGHTER. (Fig. 130.) *Eastman Johnson.*

The group forms a headline, the head of the single figure merely a spot. In Fig. 141 we have Diag. 54 *a,* in Fig. 130 version *b,* and in Fig. 134 version *c.*

In Eastman Johnson's "Milton Dictating to his Daughters," Fig. 130, the figures are placed in a rather monotonous way. They are too far away from each other and there is nothing to connect them. The foreground is too bald, and the bookcase with its horizontal lines is in no relation to the shapes of the figures. The picture has many excellent qualities but is not satisfactory as a composition.



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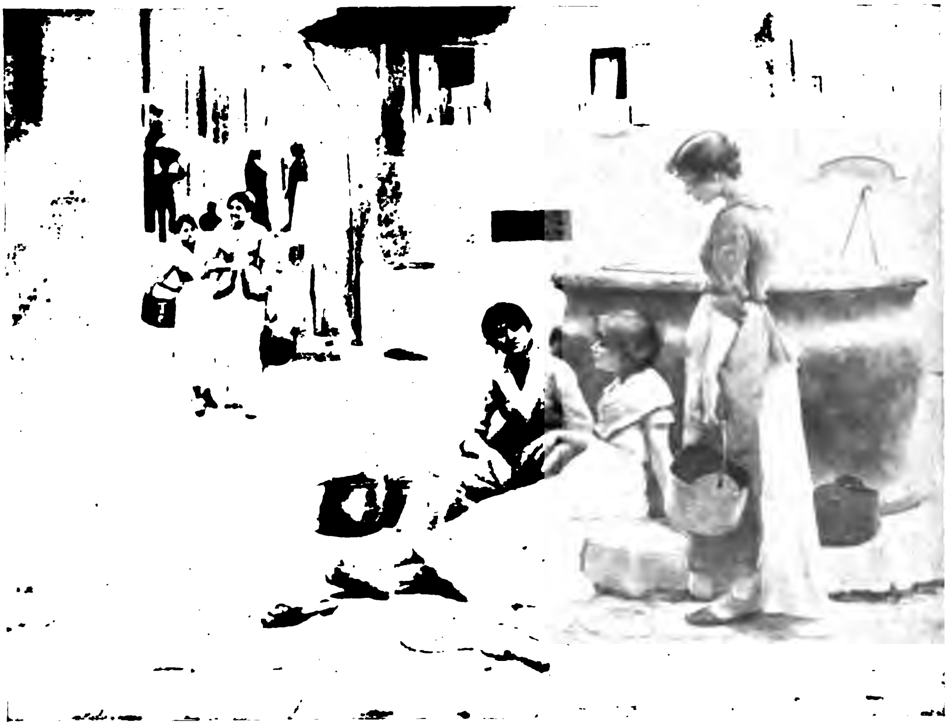
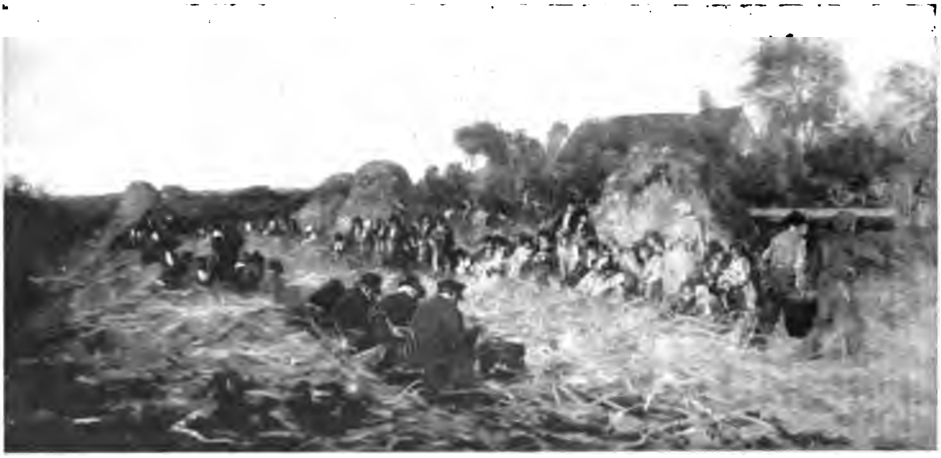
There are two other pictures by the same painter among our illustrations, the "School of Philosophy,' Fig. 135, and "Corn Husking, Nantucket," Fig. 137. The elliptical arrangement of the figures is clever but placed a trifle too high. The picture is deficient in an even balance of masses. There are too many unregulated spots. This seems to be

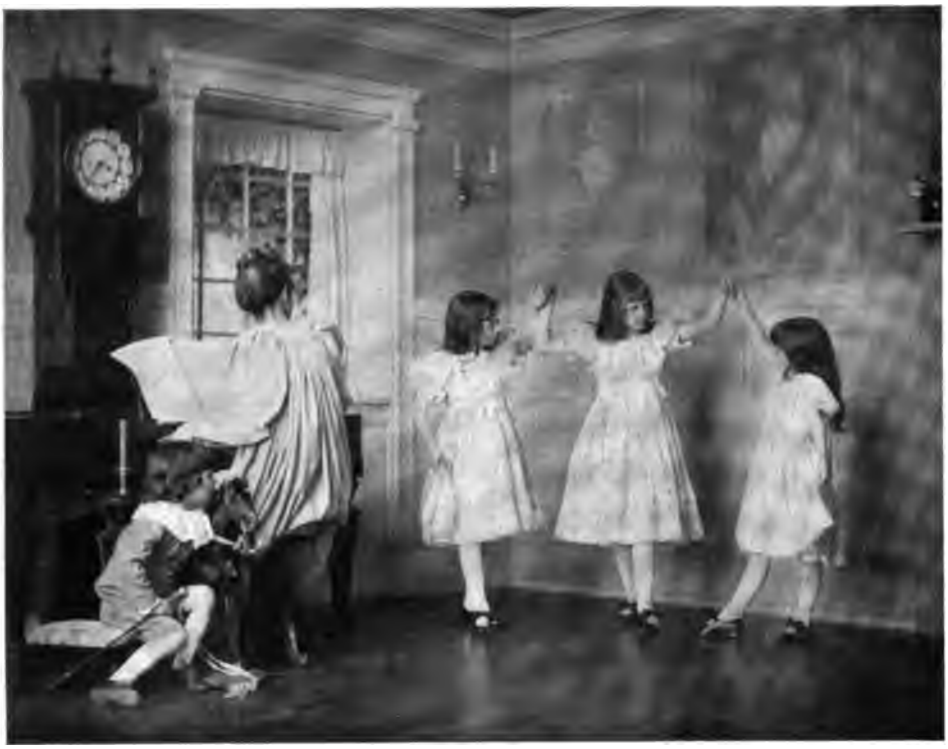


AT THE WELL. (Fig. 131.) *H. Denman.*

a shortcoming of the artist as we have encountered it before. The types of the villagers are carefully chosen and posed in characteristic attitudes, in particular the shoemaker and the old man behind the stove. The shoemaker on the bench with the sunlit background covered with all sorts of accumulations is a picture in itself, and really a better one than the entire one. You will often



CORN HUSKING, NANTUCKET. (Fig. 137.) ***Eastman Johnson.***



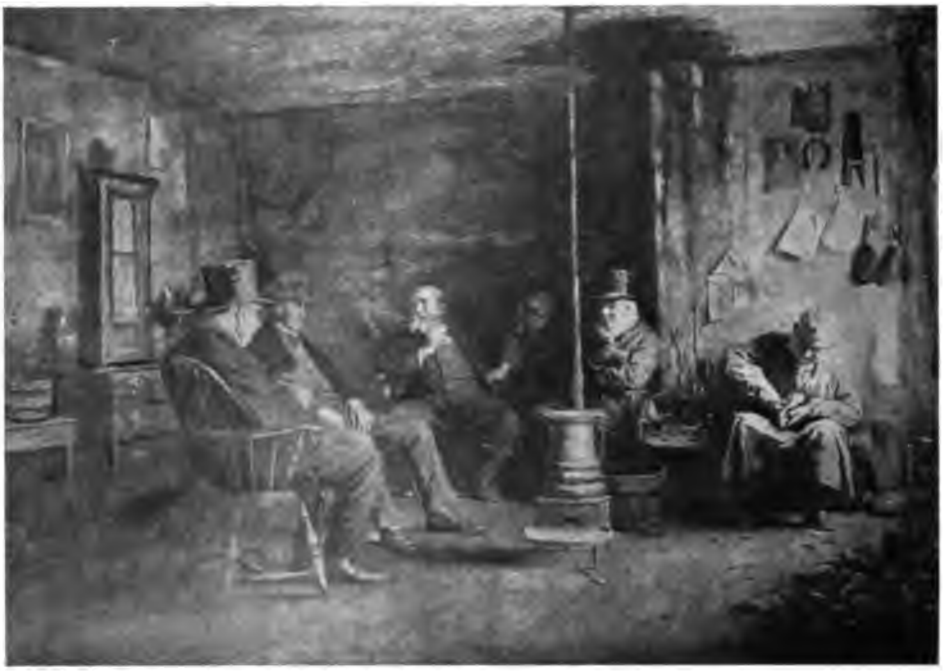
THE DANCE. (Fig. 138.) *Rudolph Eickemeyer, Jr.*

come across pictures that contain a picture within a picture. Whenever this is the case you may be certain that there is something wrong about the composition. In a good composition nothing is isolated.

Fig. 137 on the other hand is an excellent example of the triangular cut in figure composition. The place is well filled and the irregular lines of the huskers have the right accents to make them agreeable to the eye. Local events like a husking bee are well worth depicting. They have a human interest and can be treated in a broad picturesque manner.

The "Division Stock Co.," by J. A. Hood, Fig. 140, is an ordinary group photograph, although fairly well done from the professional point of view. The grouping itself is not so bad, but the figures are all posed in a stereotyped manner. There is no life in the picture and no pictorial quality whatever. I merely show it as an example of what to avoid. As a portrait it has merits but as a picture, despite the triangular cut and the undulating headline, it is a failure.

Fig. 129 is good in detail and texture but spotty. Each figure taken by itself is a good portrait and tonal composition, but grouped together the impression is one of monotony. You may argue that Franz Hals has done the same thing, simply combined five or six separate portraits into a group. True enough, but he had some light conception that formed the connecting link and



SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY. (Fig. 135.) *Eastman Johnson.*

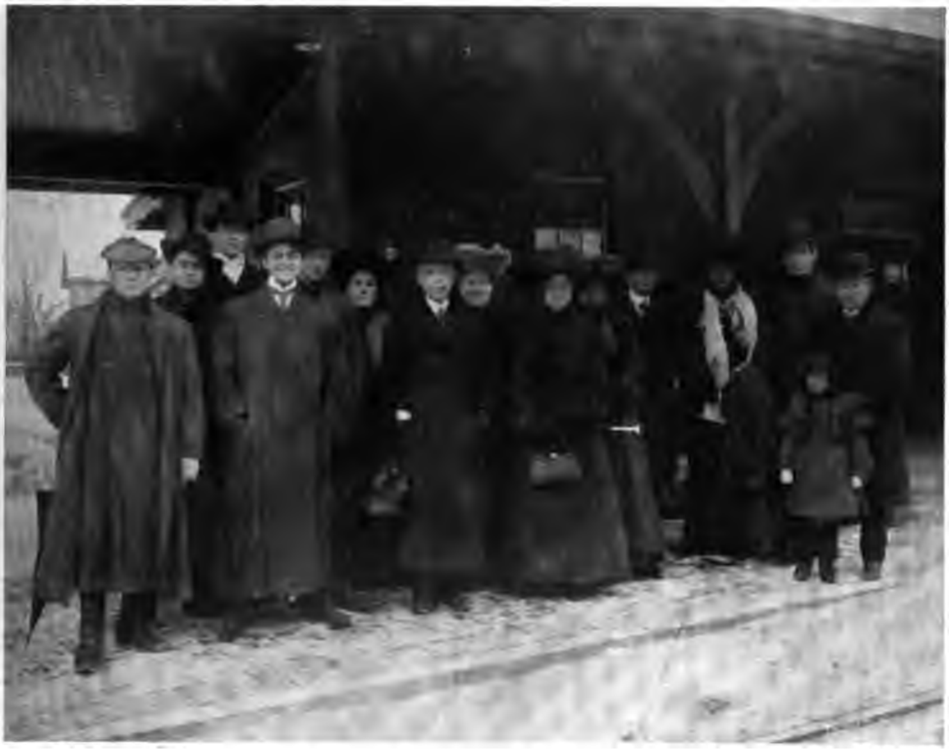
put life and virility in the picture. He did not treat five figures in exactly the same manner, and placed them in a straight line so that they formed a zigzag repetition of shapes. Professionals should stick to portraiture, they rarely make a hit as pictorialists.

Even Eickemeyer's "The Dance," looks posed and consequently somewhat stiff. The trouble with photographic genre is that it depends too largely on the models and their ability to pose, and to remain natural looking during a long studio exposure is almost a physical impossibility. Eickemeyer made a most ambitious attempt to overcome these difficulties; he had the proper models and studio outfits on hand, he thought out the composition carefully, altered it frequently, made study after study until he finally succeeded in getting an excellent result. But pictures of this kind will always lack virility.

"On the Dyke," Fig. 134, by Elizabeth Nourse, an American woman painter living in Holland is interesting as a rectangular composition with a diagonal division in the seascape. The parallelism in the group, reminding one of Japanese figures, is decorative in tendency. You will notice that the group has a quadrilateral shape. The severity of the rectangular idea is somewhat broken by the curve form of the little child.

A repetition of shapes we have in W. G. Corthell's "Waiting for Fair Weather," Fig. 136. It never fails to produce an effect, but the figures in the middle distance are badly placed and the sky line is too straight.

"Colonial Days," by Jeanne E. Bennett, shows a repetition of forms in the seated figures and of angles in all three. Together they make a triangular



DAVIDSON STOCK CO. (Fig. 140.) *J. A. Hood.*

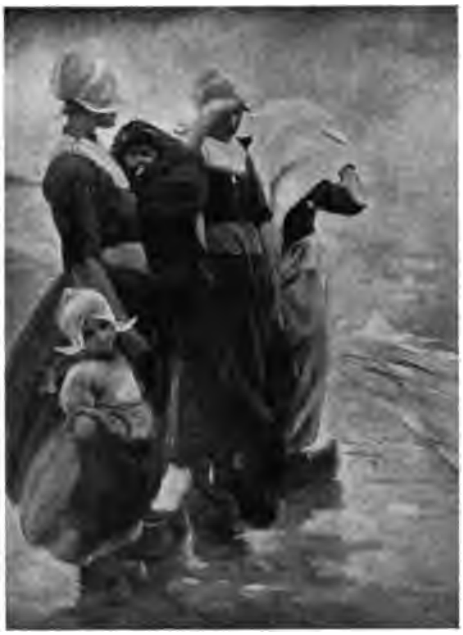
shape. But I fear there are too many lines in the foreground and background. If the diagonal division of light and shade had been carried out more poignantly the picture might have fared better. As it is there is too much even light distribution and the picture looks flat.

A very fine triangular group of three female figures, each decided and individual in its linear form, is shown by Herbert Denman in his "At the Well."

Photographers who appreciate the variety and distinction of linear expression will find valuable information in the study of Japanese prints. The Japanese were first of all draughtsmen and laid special stress upon the detail of line. To produce a combination of easy flowing lines full of life and character is nearly as valuable an accomplishment as to concoct an even tonality which hides so many shortcomings in its dismal seas of brown.

Fig. 141 shows a fairly well managed group, but there is nothing special to comment upon. It lacks concentration. A darker background caused by the closed lower windows would have made the figures more interesting.

The "Caritas," by Abbott Thayer, Fig. 133, is a beautiful sample of symmetrical composition. It represents perfect balance, beauty, and repose, and is achieved by the simplest means. A long parallelogram supported by two smaller ones, with a equilateral triangle formed by the head and extended arms. The light plane of the figures is balanced by the two long curves of the



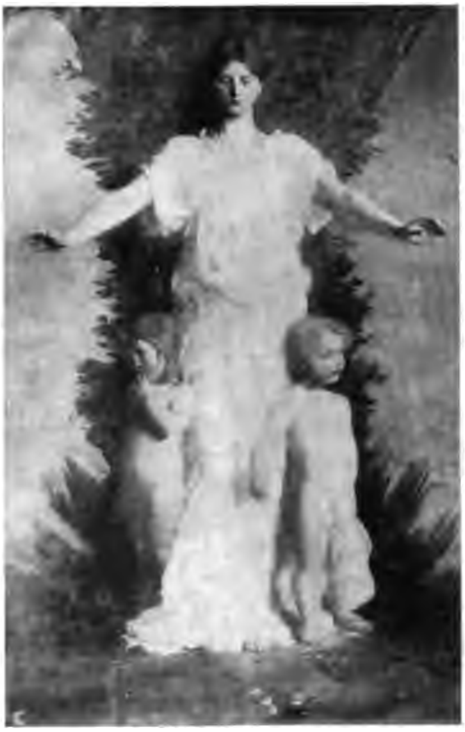
ON THE DYKE. (Fig. 134.) *Elizabeth Nourse.*

Painting and photography, true enough, are two entirely different propositions, but the fundamental principles of composition remain the same in all mediums of pictorial representation.

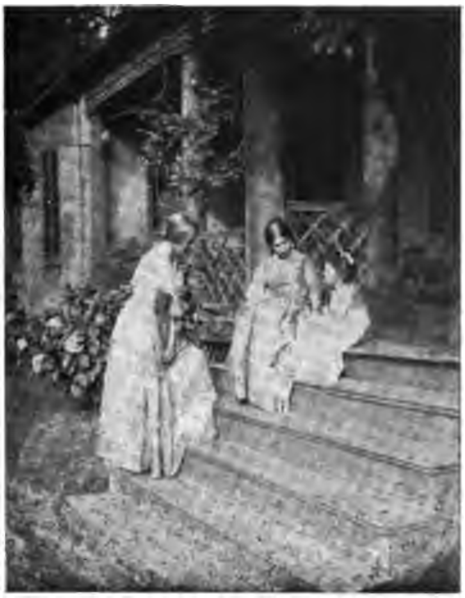
To those who believe that photography can tell certain things better than any other vehicle of expression, I would advise to be as realistic and impressionistic as possible, and to strive for character, virility, and variety rather than studio effects. The subjects are everywhere. We only need to keep our eyes open. Any person with sympathy for the time, place, and conditions in which he lives, has only to take a walk, or board a trolley, to find a picture worthy of depiction and full of human interest.

Contemporary life and local effects are always interesting and the more dark foliage. Compositions of this kind are only suitable to express allegorical ideas. Vivacity, variety, and picturesqueness of effect are impossible to it.

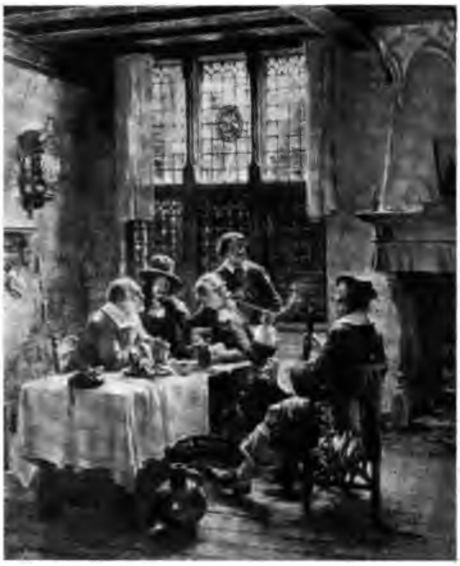
Each form of composition has its own individuality and demands its own range of subjects. In the 141 illustrations that have accompanied my articles I have shown a large variety of themes. I do not say that they were all photographically possible but they were suggestive of the best that is accomplished in contemporary art. I have avoided examples of Old Masters, and laid special stress upon good examples of our younger American painters. There are no better examples than can be furnished by contemporary artists of our own country.



CARITAS. (Fig. 133.) *A. H. Thayer.*

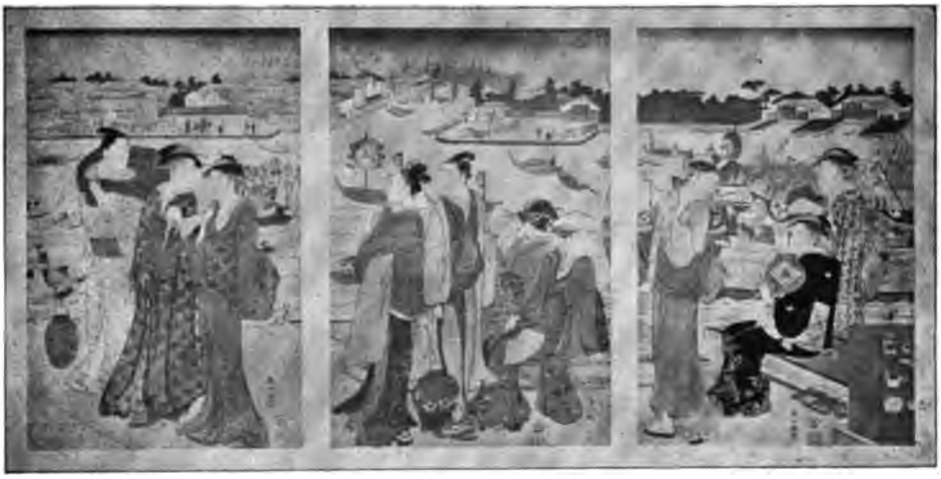


COLONIAL DAYS. *Jeanne Bennett.*
(Fig. 132.)



IN THE TAVERN. *Max Gaissey.*
(Fig. 141.)

realistic these efforts are the more hopeful the future of pictorialism will grow, for it is not dullness in nature, but an intense tediousness in the seer that gives rise to the phrase "commonplace realism" and urges photography to hie itself to an artificial studio atmosphere.



YEDDO STREET SCENES. (Fig. 139.) *Shunsho.*

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